

Queering Heteronormativity at Home in London



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Signed Declaration

I, Brent Pilkey, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Signed:

Abstract

This thesis offers a London-based contemporary study of sexuality at home. I draw from architectural history, feminist and queer theory as well as geographies of sexualities to interrogate the stability of domesticity. Highlighting everyday homemaking practices of more than 40 non-heterosexual households in London, I seek to complicate one overarching regime of power that dominates our cultural value system: heteronormativity – the idea that normative heterosexuality is the default sexuality to which everyone must conform or declare themselves against.

The project is a response to three decades of academic research that has looked at the spatialised ways in which sexual identity unfolds in, for the most part, peripheral zones in the ‘Western’ metropolis, spaces beyond the domestic realm. This thesis takes a different architectural approach; one where through interviewing 47 lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) Londoners, as well as eleven domestic tradespeople that work in these homes, agency is given to small-scale domestic interventions and everyday actions. The concept of ‘queering’ is important to the framework, which, in the context of the thesis, is understood as an on-going process that LGBTQ people are engaged in through homemaking and daily living. Although some participants may not see this as a political act, I argue otherwise and suggest queering at home is a form of political activism. Through mundane domestic actions the overarching structure of heteronormativity might be challenged. I contend that queering the home unfolds in various, complex and conflicting ways.

The thesis seeks to provoke both queer theory and politics, by opening up existing approaches and remits to allow room for a domestic method. In addition, the thesis seeks to challenge assumptions within architecture but also in the wider sense. I aim to break down stereotypes surrounding non-heterosexual homemaking practices that architectural studies and media representations problematically reproduce.

Table of Contents

Signed Declaration	2
Abstract	3
Table of Contents	4
List of Figures	6
Acknowledgements	10
Introduction	12
Prelude	13
Heteronormativity, the first key concept.....	14
Queering, the second key concept.....	23
A domestic approach to queer activism	34
Introducing the subsequent chapters	49
Chapter 1	
Methodological Considerations	52
Introduction	53
The primary research methodology	54
The secondary research methodologies	63
Conclusion	66
Chapter 2	
The Literature Review: Negotiating Queer Domesticity	68
Introduction	69
Deconstructing hegemony.....	70
“The trouble with normal[ising]” queer space	86
A gay domestic aesthetic.....	104
Conclusion	122
Chapter 3	
Youth Identity and Home	123
Introduction	124
Embodying LGBTQ youth identity: coming out, migration and nostalgia	125
LGBTQ youth queering heteronormativity: temporality and renting in London ..	140
Conclusion	158
Chapter 4	
Older LGBTQ Londoners at Home	159
Introduction	160
Materiality and experiences of home	161
Looking beyond materiality	187
Conclusion	201
Chapter 5	
The Gay Plumber: Domestic Tradespeople Queering Home	202
Introduction	203
A queer domestic trade network	204
Looking at domestic space through rainbow-tinted glasses.....	221
Conclusion	232

Conclusion	234
Bibliography	254
Primary literature (referenced in the text).....	255
Films, websites and other sources.....	280
Secondary literature (consulted, but not referenced in the text)	283
Formal research interviews with participants	294
Formal research interviews with domestic tradespeople	297
Appendices	298
Appendix A – Ethics Approval Correspondence	299
Appendix B – Queer Domesticity Interview Questions.....	300
Appendix C – Recruitment Poster	305
Appendix D – Home study: Qualitative Research Data Showing Respondents’ Demographic, Identity Characteristics and Housing Arrangements.....	306
Appendix E – LGBTQ Domestic Work Interview Questions	309
Appendix F – Tradesperson Study: Qualitative Research Data Showing Respondents’ Demographic and Identity Characteristics	311
Appendix G – Domesticity Participant Writing Diary.....	312
Appendix H – Interview Consent Form	314

List of Figures

Frontispiece – A Victorian-terraced street in London where LGBTQ identity on the surface may be unreadable at first glance.

Author's own photograph.

Figure 0.1 – Arrangement of a ground floor in a three-bedroomed house, alternative 3.

Anon. (1944). *Design of Dwellings: Report of the Design of Buildings Sub-Committee and of a Study Group of the Ministry of Town and Country Planning on Site Planning and Layout in Relation to Housing*. London: His Majesty's Stationary Office: pp. 38.

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Figure 0.2 – Advertisement on the London Underground. Spring 2012.

Malyon, Sean. *I've Gone Underground* [online] (no date). Available at: <<http://seanmalyonphoto.wordpress.com/category/espn-fa-cup-poster-the-cup-of-dreams-sean-malyon-photography/>>. Accessed 29 June 2012. Thanks to Rachel Scicluna for a stimulating discussion on the image.

Figure 1.1 – Screen snapshot from Gay's The Word Facebook page. 6 December 2010.

Available at <<https://www.facebook.com/gaysttheword>>. Accessed 15 November 2011.

Figure 1.2 – An advertisement soliciting LGBTQ custom placed in the back of the lesbian magazine g3.

g3 Magazine for Lesbian and Bi Women [online] (2011). October. Available at: <<http://g3mag.co.uk/g3mag/>>.

Figure 2.1 – Raymond and Laird's Toronto home.

Bozikovic, Alex (2012). "Great Spaces: A Downtown Couple Shows off their Enthusiasm for Mid-Century Design." *Toronto Life* (20 June).

Available at: <<http://www.torontolife.com/daily/style/from-the-print-edition/2012/06/20/great-spaces-reading-rainbow/>>. Accessed 3 August 2012.

Figure 2.2 – Aerial rendering of BOOM.

BOOM Palm Springs [online] (no date). *Boom Facebook Community Album*.

Available at: <<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.268625669826160.64055.176065485748846&type=3>>. Accessed 7 August 2012 (no longer available).

Figure 2.3 – Joel Sanders’s design for BOOM.

Kennedy, Jenn (2011). “Matthias Hollwich’s BOOM: A Gay Architect’s Forthcoming Oasis for LGBT Retirees.” *Huffington Post*, Gay Voices (5 December). Available at: <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jenn-kennedy/matthias-hollwich-boom-lgbt-retirement_b_1119541.html>. Accessed 13 August 2012.

Figure 2.4 – Diller Scofidio + Renfro’s proposal for BOOM.

Left image: Portwood, Jerry (2012). “Prime Location.” *Out Magazine* 19 March. Available at: <<http://www.out.com/news-commentary/2012/03/19/gay-retirement-boom-matthias-hollwich-marc-kushner-hwkn>>. Accessed 13 August 2012.

Right image: Diller Scofidio + Renfro [online] (no date). *BOOM! Palm Springs*. Available at: <<http://www.dsny.com/>>. Accessed 13 August 2012.

Figure 2.5 – BOOM project renderings.

Upper left image: Minner, Kelly (2011). “BOOM Community.” *Arch Daily* 12 February. Available at: <<http://www.archdaily.com/111253/boom-community/12-09-zoom/>>. Accessed 13 August 2012.

Upper right image: Walker, Alissa (no Date). “BOOM! Palm Springs Plans a Wacky, \$250m Retirement Community for Gays.” *Co Design*. Available at: <<http://www.fastcodesign.com/1663207/boom-palm-springs-plans-a-wacky-250m-retirement-community-for-gays>>. Accessed 13 August 2012.

Lower left image: BOOM Palm Springs [online] (no date). *Design: Architecture / Hollwich Kushner*. Available at: <<http://boompalmsprings.com/design/hollwichkushner/#9>>. Accessed 13 August 2012.

Lower right image: BOOM Palm Springs [online] (no date). *Design: Architecture / J Mayer H*. Available at: <<http://boompalmsprings.com/design/jmayerh/#8>>. Accessed 13 August 2012.

Figure 2.6 – The Bernardi residence.

All images: Haeg, Fritz [online] (no date). *Studio Projects: The Bernardi Residence*. Available at: <<http://www.fritzhaeg.com/studio/projects/bernardisalcedo.html>>. Accessed 16 August 2012.

Figure 3.1 – A view of Eva’s bedroom.

Participant submitted image.

Figure 3.2 – Eva’s queer record collection.

Participant submitted image.

Figure 3.3 – Kylie’s and Kiera’s dining table.

Participant submitted image.

Figure 3.4 – A still from *Weekend* (2011).

Haigh, Andrew, dir. [film] (2011). *Weekend*. UK: Glendale Picture Company. Still obtained online from: Peccadillo Pictures [online] (no date). *Weekend: Images* Available at: <<http://press.peccapics.co.uk/?type=Theatrical&folder=Weekend/>>. Accessed 24 October 2012.

Figure 4.1 – Views of Devin’s memorial hallway and front room.
Author’s own photographs.

Figure 4.2 – A small statue displayed in Gerard’s bedroom.
Participant submitted image.

Figure 4.3 – Pottery belonging to Gerard.
Participant submitted image.

Figure 4.4 – Artwork in Gerard’s home.
Participant submitted image.

Figure 4.5 – A snapshot of the entrance hallway in Dean’s flat.
Author’s own photograph.

Figure 4.6 – A view of Adam’s bedroom.
Author’s own photograph.

Figure 4.7 – A view of Adam’s bathroom.
Author’s own photograph.

Figure 4.8 – Margaret’s family room and wedding photograph (inset).
Participant submitted images.

Figure 4.9 – Margaret’s first dress.
Participant submitted image.

Figure 4.10 – Dean’s refrigerator door covered in magnets.
Author’s own photograph.

Figure 5.1 – The ‘small ads’ from the back of *Boyz* magazine, issue 1062.
Boyz 1062 [online] (2012). Thursday 5 January. Available at:
<<http://www.boyz.co.uk/index.php?p=issues&type=issues>>. Accessed 7
January 2012.

Figure 5.2 – A view of *Diva* magazines in Kylie’s and Kiera’s home.
Participant submitted image.

Figure I – A view showing the dissemination of the research at the *Cities
Methodologies* exhibition.
Author’s own photograph.

Figure II – A view of the exhibition *There’s No Place Like Homo*.
Slutzky, Buzz [exhibition] (no date). *There’s No Place Like Homo*. Available
at: <<http://www.buzzslutzky.com/index.php?/project/theres-no-place-like-homo-gay-wallpaper/>>. Accessed 14 January 2013.

Figure III – Interior and exterior views of the dome at *The Sundown
Schoolhouse of Queer Home Economics*.
Author’s own photographs.

Figure IV – Another interior view at *The Sundown Schoolhouse of Queer Home Economics*.

Author's own photograph.

Figure V – A view of my living room, my own queer domesticity.

Author's own photograph.

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Introduction

Prelude

For our house is our corner of the world. As has often been said, it is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word. If we look at it intimately, *the humblest dwelling has beauty* (Bachelard 1994 [1964]: 5; emphasis added).

I start this thesis in a rather queer way, with a confession: the pages and chapters that follow are not an architectural history which showcases celebrated buildings, high-modernist architecture or even grand spaces. I do not look to buildings of the great male masters that have dominated the architectural canon; in fact I don't even know who originally designed the spaces in my case studies. Rather in writing this thesis I follow Bachelard and celebrate the "humblest dwelling[s]" – here spaces made into a home by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) Londoners. This approach allows me to explore an interest in the ways in which sexuality is spatialised in the domestic sphere. Research has shown that architecture, in many ways, "frames our sexual lives, provides images of them and to some extent limits them" (Williams 2011: 253). Links between sexuality, gender and sex, can be found in almost any architectural space. LGBTQ identity in particular is intimately related to space and the objects which fill it. Theorist Sara Ahmed reminds us that to invoke 'sexual orientation' is to use a spatial metaphor: "If we know where we are when we turn this way or that way, then we are orientated... To be orientated is also to be turned toward certain objects, those that help us to find our way" (Ahmed 2006: 1; Castiglia and Reed 2012: 75; Probyn 2003). As a place where sexuality is commonly orientated, the domestic sphere offers a spatial confluence of LGBTQ identity, architecture and the everyday.

Drawing from the academic disciplines of architectural history, geographies of sexualities, feminist and queer theory, this thesis contributes to a growing body of literature that looks at the intimate relationship between sexuality and home. In light of the amount of research that has considered the links between social identity and space, it is surprising that so few scholars have questioned the ways in which sexual identity and home coalesce. Working in mainly the Australian context, human geographer Andrew Gorman-Murray has made the largest contribution to this new field of research. He does this specifically by widening the scope of geographies of sexualities to investigate the domestic across multiple regions and groups. Taking its cue from Gorman-Murray's research, this project looks at 'non-normative' sexualities and home in an effort to interrogate the stability of domesticity. In this,

the thesis also responds to architectural historian Gülsüm Baydar's call to turn domesticity on its head. She states:

...the normative structure of domesticity has largely been the single-family household governed by heterosexual relationships with man as the head of the household and women as the caretaker. Once other figures of masculinity and femininity enter the scene, both the notion of a normative unified subject and the norm of domesticity are challenged, for these others are bound to cite the norm differently (Baydar 2005: 34).

Specifically adding LGBTQ people to the agenda of rethinking domesticity is one of the broader aims of this thesis. To offer an alternative representation of domesticity, I highlight everyday homemaking practices of 40 LGBTQ households in London, which draw from interviews with both home occupiers themselves as well as domestic tradespeople that work in other homes belonging to sexual minorities. In so doing I attempt to complicate one problematic overarching regime of power that dominates our cultural value system (Ingraham 2006: 309): the idea that a specific version of heterosexuality is the default or 'normal' identity against which all other sexualities are measured. This is known in queer theory as heteronormativity.

Heteronormativity, the first key concept

As a concept that forms a central part of this thesis, it is necessary to offer a definition of heteronormativity from the outset. Human geographer Gavin Brown defines heteronormativity "[as] the processes that socially construct a privileged heterosexuality (and related binary understandings of gender) over homosexuality and unconventional presentations of gender" (Brown 2009: 1496; see also Bell *et al.* 1994; Browne *et al.* 2007; Hubbard 2008). In other words, heteronormativity is a "set of norms that make heterosexuality seem natural or right" in contrast to the binary opposite, homosexuality. Thus heteronormativity prevents any other sexuality from being "taken for granted or going unmarked" (Corber and Valocchi 2003: 4; cited in Doan 2011: 14). Heteronormativity is not the same thing as heterosexuality and it is essential to distinguish the difference up front as they relate to this thesis. The latter term refers to sex relations between opposite-sexed people, whereas heteronormativity is a larger construct that relates to a specific model of the monogamous and heterosexual couple who come together to form a nuclear family. By its very nature of being a normative construct it is deeply problematic. It can work to pathologise those that do not fit into it, such as non-heterosexuals – by setting up an 'us' and 'them' binary which risks enabling homophobia, biphobia and transphobia – but it is equally problematic for those who claim to identify within the

mainstream. Heteronormative ideology, in the words of psychologist Meg Barker, “puts pressure on those who are inside it to stay inside it, and may prevent them for finding the kinds of sex and relationships that work for them” (Barker 2011). In addition, as numerous sex scandals highlight, it is questionable just how ‘normative’ heterosexuality really is: heteronormativity is problematic on a number of fronts. In this research project I follow in this spirit to work towards challenging the narrow and restricting nature of heteronormativity. Moreover, I do not take issue with everyday lived heterosexuality. In fact I speculate in the concluding chapter that a similar study with those that identify with the mainstream would equally work to destabilise heteronormative ideology at home. Recognising the problems of heteronormativity, queer approaches have recently moved towards a model of sexual diversity, which moves away from a binary of normal/abnormal. Therefore, rather than make claims for a monolithic representation of minority domesticity, this project works to celebrate the diversity of LGBTQ home; I argue sexuality plays out in multiple ways which offer challenges to the idea of heteronormativity linked to home.

Challenging heteronormative social and sexual relations is one of the key tenets of queer theory and, as suggested, something that this thesis strives to do. One of the earliest academics to contribute to queer theory, literary critic and theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, argues that gay identity is predicated on continuous acts of declaration, whereas heterosexual identity is naturally presumed (1990: 68). Sedgwick made the point that the ‘epistemology of the closet’ is a knowledge base in the ‘straight’ imaginary that necessitates gay people to ‘come out of the closet’ – the term for exposing one’s secret sexual identity – and declare themselves as homosexual; it is never assumed. Despite being more than two decades old, Sedgwick’s argument still stands: heterosexuality is deeply ingrained as the ‘normal’ sexuality. In fact it is often considered rude or offensive in virtually every culture to assume someone is gay.

Two scholars who have written widely within queer studies are Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner and their definition of heteronormativity speaks to the concept’s omnipresent power:

A sense of rightness – embedded in things and not just in sex – is what we call heteronormativity... It is more than an ideology, or prejudice, or phobia against gays and lesbians; it is produced in almost every aspect of the forms and arrangements of social life: nationality, the state, and the law... (Berlant and Warner 1998: 554–555).

The concept of heteronormativity implies that space is socially produced (an idea to which I return). Instead of theorising space as *a priori* heteronormative, scholars have shown the ways in which space *mimics* heteronormative human actions (Hubbard 2008: 14). That is, heteronormativity is the direct result of the actions of people who inhabit space which has the result of oppressing minorities and it can be changed with human action. Although perhaps not widely found in the everyday lexicon, heteronormativity is certainly something many LGBTQ people experience at several stages and to varying degrees over the course of their lives.

In this spirit, it is important to mention my own experiences here and to help explain why I decided to undertake this Ph.D. I want to share three memories, two from my childhood and one from more recently, which will begin to situate my own subjectivity and show that my interest in working towards challenging heteronormativity has been long in the making. The formative years spent with my family (*c.* 1980s to the late-1990s) were relatively conventional: I grew up in a village of less than 1000 people, in rural southern Canada; I came from a working-class family where my mother stayed home raising two children and my father was, at least for my earliest years, the sole bread-winner, working as a truck driver. I would occasionally accompany my father on his three-to-five-day-long trips to neighbouring United States. On one particular journey to Wisconsin, we pulled into a rest stop to eat breakfast and shower. On the way back to the truck my dad asked why I did not open the wrapped bar of soap he gave me. I replied saying that I did not want to be wasteful so used one that was already in the shower stall. My father informed me that soap is not something one should be sharing with a stranger and noted that sharing soap is how one could get AIDS. I was terrified. This was 1990 (to my best guess), the AIDS crisis was in full swing and I was seven. Clearly my father was misinformed, but at the time paranoia was sweeping across the globe about the ways in which the virus was contracted and who spread it – his response was not exceptional.¹ We did not discuss anything else about the virus, nor did he recite the early pejorative view that it was a ‘gay disease’ (then commonly referred as Gay Related Immune Deficiency Syndrome and Gay Plague), although I was led to believe it was spread by ‘dirty’ men who shared soap with each other. The fact that I remember the geographical location of this incident is not insignificant. Not only was

¹ In what would later become one of her “most-memorable episodes” American talk show host Oprah Winfrey devoted one of her hour-long shows in 1987 to the experience of Mike Sisco, a gay man who had contracted HIV and then caused scandal in Williamson, West Virginia. After swimming in the local pool it was immediately evacuated in hysteria and the mayor even issued a notice to the town informing citizens that the pool was closed for health reasons (see Oprah Winfrey 1987).

AIDS forming a major part of the moral panic of the heteronormative mind-set at the time, but there was an international hunt for a cannibalistic gay serial killer on the loose, Jeffrey Dahmer (1960–1994), who was raping and gruesomely dismembering young men in Milwaukee, the city to which we were delivering freight. My dad would not let me out of his sight, with the exception of showering in the adjacent cubicle.

Approximately three years later, when I was ten, I had caused my parents to get into a heated disagreement over my incessant use of the colloquial discourse particle “like” *e.g.* “I, *like*, don’t know what to do”. Despite seeming like a trivial thing that a child does which annoys his parents, I distinctly recall one thing that was said. In the argument one parent angrily retorted “Do you want him [me] to grow up to be a faggot?”² – an obloquy my older brother regularly used towards me. These memories left lasting impressions. As I aged and started to deal with my sexual identity, I looked back on these childhood scenes. I was struggling with my own feelings, the information given to me and the views of my family. The earliest gay figure that I had ever heard of was a psychopathic serial killer, my first knowledge of AIDS was provided to me in a discourse of soap and cleanliness (and by this time I was of the belief that contracting the disease was a very real possibility if ever I was to act on my sexuality; thus being gay, contracting AIDS and dying an early death was seemingly inevitable), and I knew my parents did not think highly of *those* people (faggots).³ In my own childhood, like countless others, I had to find my way in what was by default a deeply heteronormative home.

The domestic sphere is perhaps the site where heteronormativity is most firmly rooted. Many young people are forced to come to terms with their sexuality in the family home, within what architect and theorist Henry Urbach (2000: 347) calls “a regime of (almost) compulsory heterosexuality”. Warner contends this has a life-long effect: “[n]o amount of adult “acceptance” or progress in civil rights is likely to eliminate this experience of queerness for many children and adolescents” (1999: 8). There are very real implications of dealing with LGBTQ identity in the heterosexual home which the UK charity The Albert Kennedy Trust (AKT), for instance, knows

² *Like*, as if (this has anything to do with being gay)!

³ One could draw links with my earliest memory of AIDS to English and gender studies academic Anne McClintock’s essay on soap and Victorian colonialism. In both instances the notion of soap, dirt, abject subjects, and moralism can be linked to experiences of domesticity. In her piece McClintock shows how the nineteenth century’s obsession with soap offered a triangulation of problems: it saw “the *undervaluation* of women’s work in the domestic realm, the *overvaluation* of the commodity in the industrial market and the *disavowal* of colonized economies in the arena of empire” (McClintock 1998: 506; emphasis in original).

all too well. The charity supports LGBTQ youth who are homeless or living in a hostile environment, “Many of [which] have been rejected by their parents or bullied at school just for being brave enough to come out and be themselves” (Stephen 2011). My research shows, though, that by no means is this a uniform experience, with some participants sharing affirmative coming-out narratives. The act of coming out highlights just one way in which heteronormativity is experienced at home.

Of course the concept plays out in many other spaces too, as the earlier definitions by queer theorists suggest. The third and final autobiographical experience I want to share has to do with the workplace. Before embarking on the Ph.D., I worked for an architectural firm in Canada for nine years. It became clear to me early on that normative heterosexuality was one of the pillars of the company. From office chit-chat to the company golf tournament led by the three senior male partners, to family pictures on colleagues’ desks, to the annual Christmas party, heterosexuality was the measure of success; there was never an appropriate moment to ‘come out’. I never brought a partner to a work function and instead felt obligated to bring a female friend simply to avoid questions. My experience is not atypical, for many non-heterosexuals, the workplace is a difficult terrain to navigate (see also Rumens 2011 for a study of gay men in the workplace and chapter two for further discussion on inequality in the architectural profession).

Sharing these three brief memories works to not only position the autobiographical voice in the project, something that I return to in the literature review, but also to show the real ways in which heteronormativity shapes life experiences at home and beyond, from childhood right through adulthood. Two of these memories also point to the fact that home is a powerful space in which sexual identity plays out – here I am referring to home in both the conventional sense but also as larger-than-house (my father’s home five days a week was very much his truck, which I occasionally inhabited). In order to work at improving inequality for sexual minorities the best place to start is on the home front: a place most people are familiar with and can relate to, a space where conservative ideals are most firmly rooted, and a site in which change is slow to come. While heteronormativity shapes many younger experiences of home, it is equally, yet in distinct ways, a concept that relates to the homes belonging to older people too.

Heteronormativity, and the intimately connected concept of patriarchy, has a long history in the domestic sphere. Throughout modern history the home has been, to quote historian Christopher Reed, “the main arena for the enforcement of

conventional divisions of masculinity and femininity (along with their complement, heterosexuality)". But that is not to suggest LGBTQ people have been unable to engage with sexual identity within this space: "the modern home has also been a staging ground for rebellion against these norms" (Reed 1996b: 16). Literary critic Martin Dines focuses on suburbia, a place that he calls "arguably one of the straightest spaces imaginable", and the suburban family home in an effort to destabilise the notion that it is a place anathema to LGBTQ identity (Dines 2010: 1). In *Homecoming Queens* Dines notes how following World War II both American governmental policy and suburban architectural home design put forward a campaign to establish the heterosexual single-family household as the primary model. The suburban family home was marketed and established in the American mind-set as a place of success, a place where young heterosexual families could move forward out of the war years (Dines 2010: 10). Dines shows how the architecture of the home also reflected the single-family unit. The individual privacy of cellular rooms gave way to the modern open-plan design which better facilitated family privacy and interaction between family members; stay-at-home mothers could easily watch children while working in the open-plan kitchen (Dines 2010: 9; see also Adams 1995). This history has, of course, been widely covered in architectural history as well, by scholars from Gwendolyn Wright (1981) to Dolores Hayden (1980, 1981; see also chapter two).⁴ But through his reading of gay fiction, Dines adds a new twist to the tale, showing that gay men negotiated this space too; some protagonists evacuated it for the anonymity of the city, while others found ways to explore gay identity within suburbia.

Historian Richard Hornsey (2010) uncovers how the post-war period in London saw a similar focus on the private family home. Hornsey notes that planners, policy makers and other public experts became increasingly interested in domestic space. The home was "presented as a space of national citizenship important for scoring social order and psychological stability"; a place that needed to be the focus of attention in order to reinvest national pride and prosperity in a badly damaged country (Hornsey 2010: 201). Exhibitions like *Britain Can Make It* and *The South Bank Exhibition* established the motto "reform the home, reform the nation", and deployed modern architecture to initiate social change (Hornsey 2010: 203). Like Dines, Hornsey draws attention to the ways, that although designed with the

⁴ Along with chapter two in this thesis, Williams's (2013) chapter "What Would a Feminist City Look Like" in *Sex and Buildings* offers an introduction to this architectural literature.

heterosexual, patriarchal nuclear family in mind, the home was a site gay men regularly negotiated – and one that inevitably other sexual minorities similarly negotiated as well. A look at a project not discussed in the above texts, from the 1944 Central Housing Advisory Committee's *Design of Dwellings* (Anon. 1944), shows the way in which British planners designed modern homes with the heterosexual nuclear family ideology in mind (Figure 0.1) – one based on home as the female space of reproduction, wherein the husband does little work. In the plan the mother is relegated to the kitchen quarters preparing a meal and doing dishes, while the children wait patiently at a table for the meal and the husband sits relaxing in the lounge area with his back turned to the family.

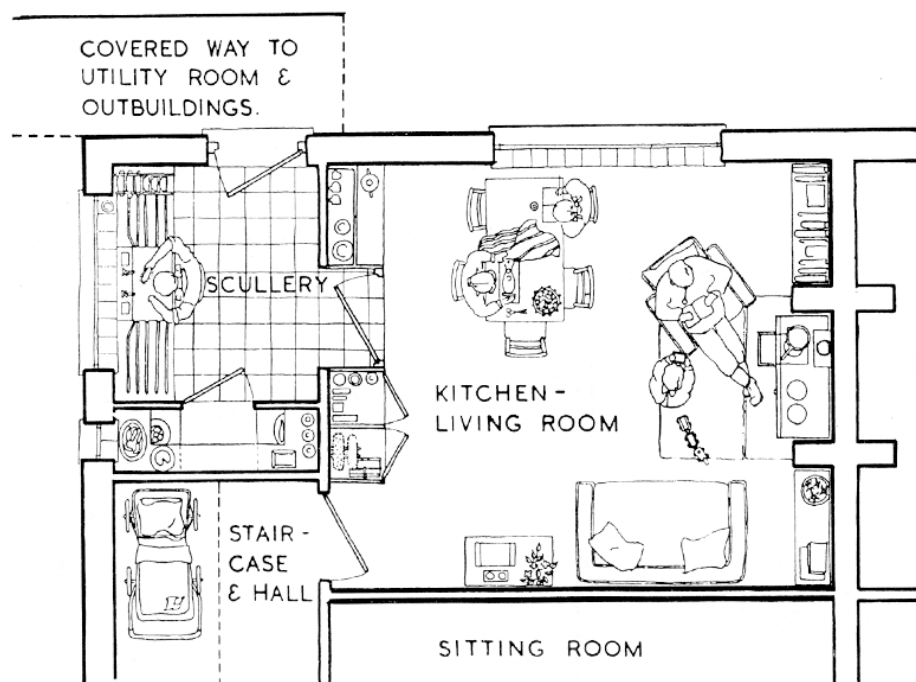


Figure 0.1 – Designs for modern homes reinforced a patriarchal, heterosexual and nuclear family ideology.

Despite the passage of several decades and the efforts of feminists worldwide, one can see surprising similarities in a recent advertisement found on the London Underground for ESPN sports (Figure 0.2). In it a husband (we are reminded of his married status by his wedding ring) sits at a kitchen table perfecting a model of the English Football Association Cup out of mashed potato while his wife in the background looks bemused. We are led to believe that this scene is enacted in a typical English home – ‘bangers and mash’, HP Sauce, and separate water taps are all truly British. The representation quality may have improved, but the subject matter of the advertisement could date to the immediate post-war period, or even

earlier.

Figure 0.2 – The reproduction of heteronormative domesticity as found in an advertisement on the London Underground, spring 2012.

Hornsey observes that even though the home was – and continues to be – an important space of conservative heterosexual national pride, the increasing presence of homosexuals in urban centres meant the exclusivity of home was re-evaluated in Britain. In the decade following the Wolfenden Report (1959), which saw the partial decriminalisation of same-sex intimacy in private, the home became the only legal site in which queer identity could be expressed (Hornsey 2010: 202; see also Kentlyn 2008: 330). Both Dines and Hornsey's studies highlight that in the post-war period the heterosexual nuclear family home became a contested terrain, a place where non-heterosexual identity was suppressed but also a place where it was legitimised. While such architectural interventions as the open-plan, and conventions such as a larger 'master' bedroom and two smaller bedrooms, were intended to be inhabited by the nuclear family, LGBTQ people could inhabit and negotiate these spaces too. Even though there have been legal reforms in the UK that permit sexual minorities to set up home, such as the decriminalisation of homosexuality and the legalisation of civil unions (and possibly soon same-sex marriage), as the above image hints, much of society still envisions the home as a hetero-patriarchal domain. Although focusing on contemporary LGBTQ Londoners, this thesis adds to studies like Dines's and Hornsey's by offering a challenge to the bastion of heterosexuality, the British family home.

Finding ways to challenge heteronormativity more generally has not just been limited to academics working in queer theory. Much of the research produced in spatialised disciplines that have focused on sexual minorities has also sought to

contribute to overturning a heteronormative stronghold. From the mid-1990s a small but increasing number of academics across disciplines have researched the ways that LGBTQ sexual identity unfolds in a few global cities. This research has had two advantages: it has offered a challenge to the ‘straightness’ of academia, and it has legitimised inhabitation of metropolitan centres by showing how sexual minorities stake claim to urban space. One of the earliest British academics to focus on gay identity and urban space was geographer Jon Binnie, who, in his dissertation, also conducted at University College London, offered a ‘no-holds-barred’ method of bringing public sex centre-stage in order to resist the heteronormative pressures of doing ‘respectable’ research (Binnie 1997: 160, 33, 41). Much of the literature, at least until recently, has taken a similar approach. Academics have tended to focus on public, semi-public and visible spaces of gay identity, commercial gay clusters and spaces where male-male public sex takes place – the bulky anthology *Queers in Space* with its overwhelming focus on community and public sites of resistance is an example *par excellence* (Ingram *et al.* 1997).

Although these sites are the main areas of focus in urban geographies of sexualities, academics in other fields have sought to fill in lacunas by looking at other areas, including rural geographies (Kramer 1995; Fellows 1996; Howard 1999; Phillips *et al.* 2000; Knopp and Brown 2003; Halberstam 2005; Gorman-Murray 2007a; Gray 2009; Waite and Gorman-Murray 2011b), sexual citizenship (Weeks 1998; Bell and Binnie 2000; Goodwin, Lyons and Stephens forthcoming; Richardson 1998, 2000) and virtual spaces (Mowlabocus 2010). Few, however, have engaged with ordinary and non-celebrated domestic spaces. One important recent exception is historian Matt Cook who makes the point that scholars tend to forget that home has always been an important part of sexual minorities’ identity: “Even the most scandalous gay lives had a domestic component”, notes historian Sharon Marcus (2009: 139; cited in Cook 2011: 304). Although focusing on contemporary queer domesticity rather than largely historical instances, this thesis shares its approach with Cook – who at the time of writing is preparing a manuscript on British queer domesticity across the twentieth century (Cook forthcoming). Like Cook, the project reinvests the domestic sphere with significance.

Architectural writings that foreground sexual identity also work to challenge heteronormativity – either explicitly or not. Perhaps one of the most well-known monographs is written by architect and critic Aaron Betsky. In *Queer Space* (1997) Betsky looks at places where same-sex desires play out – from the baths of ancient

Greece to Studio 54 in New York City, among many others. Although largely focusing on non-domestic space, he does offer a few examples of gay male domestic space, such as architect Philip Johnson's (1906–2005) glass house. Betsky's personal reading applies stereotyped gay traits including the obsession with sex as well as individual vanity to canonical architecture. Vanity – assumed to be a trait all out gay men share – for instance, is used to show how Johnson's home is what he calls a 'queer space' because the glass walls proudly expose the private space to the exterior, and in doing so offers a challenge to domestic architecture.

I return to *Queer Space* in chapter two when I critique Betsky's book along with architectural historian Katarina Bonnevier's *Behind Straight Curtains* (2007) – a more recent architectural text with a related approach – but I mention these here to show how this project moves in a new direction. Betsky's reading of Johnson is creative and brings an advocacy approach into architectural theory but I tend to agree with Williams when he suggests that "Johnson's architecture is queer, in other words, because Betsky and others say it is, rather than because it is based on much evidence" (2013: 178). Despite this, Betsky and Bonnevier, and a few others, celebrate largely canonical and famous spaces where the challenge to heteronormativity might be read in clearly defined ways, when understood in terms of the occupants' minority sexuality. And as Williams notes, "these queer architectural readings... show how buildings might be thought of in ways that depart from the rational and normative" (Williams 2013: 178).

I offer a different architectural project; one that does not start from the premise of stereotypes about LGBTQ sexuality – which many people do not identify with anyway – but rather from the experiences of the users of domestic space. In fact, resisting stereotypes of a 'gay domestic aesthetic' as I will do in chapter two is one of the main themes that runs through the research. Through interviewing, agency is given to the small-scale interventions and everyday actions of users at home. In this thesis this act or process is referred to as 'queering'.

Queering, the second key concept

Along with heteronormativity, 'queering' is the second concept that forms an important part of this thesis and one that needs to be discussed up front. I suggest queering is a process and action that sexual minorities enact through the inhabitation of everyday domestic space. Intentional or not, homemaking practices and daily living are understood in the research that this thesis draws upon as the way in which

heteronormativity might be challenged at home. Grammar is important when discussing the concept of queering. To emphasise that queering is a process, it is vital to utilise it as a verb, that is, ‘to queer’ or ‘queering’ and ‘queered’. Queer theorists tend to use caution when discussing queer as a noun. It is often tied to essentialist identity politics that sees queer subjectivity as a fundamental component of identity (Sullivan 2003: 50). In other words, it is often used as an umbrella term for the community of non-heterosexual people, where certain people are left out; it frequently refers to specific people, namely white gay men. This is one of the issues that I raise with Betsky’s *Queer Space*; what he actually largely refers to is gay male space. He does not emphasise queering as a process, but rather a noun co-opted by gay males. As an action, queering potentially allows an unrestrictive group of subjectivities to take part without limiting membership or raising questions of authenticity. Philosopher Mimi Marinucci is one scholar that has commented on another process, the construction of identity. She observes that social constructionism – a theory that considers phenomena developed in societal paradigms – has aimed to replace identity politics, and in so doing showed how heterosexuality, homosexuality, and other identity categories are all products of our culture; thus one is not more ‘natural’ or authentic than the other (Marinucci 2010: 7–8).

To return to the issue of grammar, many scholars have theorised queer in its verb form, as processes sexual minorities enact in space. For example, in the 1994 *Queer Space* exhibition, held at Storefront for Art and Architecture in New York City, the project statement explained: “‘Queer Space’ exists potentially everywhere in the public realm...it is the individual’s appropriation of the public realm through personal, ever-changing points of view” (McGrath *et al.* 1994; cited in Reed 1996a: 64). In other words, this exhibition argued that queer space is the result of actions rather than some sort of pre-existing or pre-defined space. And historian George Chauncey extends this even further by suggesting queer space is as fleeting as its users: “there is no queer space; there are only spaces used by queers or put to queer use” (Chauncey 1996: 224). Referring to subcultural Paris, art historian Adrian Rifkin has also noted that gay space can be virtually anything: “the twisting of a stairwell, the shelter of a lean-to, an industrial courtyard” (Rifkin 2002: 126). It is precisely the furtive and temporary quality of the architecture, Rifkin suggests, that permits a sexually libertarian culture to flourish (see also Williams 2013: 173).

I build on the literature that suggests queering is an action by arguing it is a process that is done to everyday spaces of home in an on-going and continuous manner. I contend that participants queer heteronormativity at home, which as discussed above still permeates ideological understandings of the domestic sphere, and in doing so they offer a challenge to, or queer the concept of, heteronormativity generally. In following this literature I direct the focus away from public, semi-public and peripheral spaces, those outside of the domestic realm. On first look it might seem that the domestic spaces this thesis analyses may be read as peripheral in that they are private spaces that are not regularly inhabited by the heterosexual majority; literally separate from the experience of heterosexuals. However, crucially, as feminists have argued for decades, home is a porous site in which flows of information, people and ideas pass back and forth across the threshold of the front door as well as through technological communications like the internet, phone and television. The increase in recent years of popular television sitcoms featuring gay and lesbian domestic spaces, which are watched not just in LGBTQ homes, is a clear example of this (Manuel 2009 offers an analysis of heterosexual audience consumption of LGBTQ representations on TV). While a gay village, and public toilets or parks used for cruising tend (when used in queer ways) to be sites situated on the periphery, at the edge, of mainstream experience (of course with exceptions), I would argue domestic space, regardless of who is occupying it, is at the core of society: the domestic sphere is a site with which the vast majority of the UK population is familiar. And the majority's home is a site which may look not that dissimilar to many of the spaces shown in the following chapters. Even the homes in this thesis that are clearly distinct where sexual identity is most foregrounded could easily be 'de-queered' and similarly any home, particularly if occupied in future by a LGBTQ person could easily be queered: another example of the unstable and porous nature of the heteronormative British home. Through the concept of queering, this thesis is about bringing visibility to the act of homemaking.

Through drawing attention and visibility to everyday discrete homemaking practices I borrow from the work of French philosopher Michel de Certeau who similarly makes visible everyday systems of inhabiting life and its spaces. In his text *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) De Certeau focuses on practices that happen in our everyday lives in order to show the generative power users have in creating space. Quotidian systems of inhabiting the everyday, he argues, work to reject the superstructure placed on us by society. His study is one which moves away from

conventional figures that are believed to be the sole producers of space – city planners, policy makers and architects. Instead he focuses on what he calls the consumers (occupants or inhabitants) of everyday space. It is the actions of consumers going about their daily lives that have the power to “reappropriate the space organized by techniques of sociocultural production” (de Certeau 1984: xiv). I argue sexual minorities can especially benefit from a project that acknowledges agency for the consumers of everyday space.

De Certeau uses the conceptual framework of strategies versus tactics in order to argue that practices of everyday life challenge the way space is perceived to be organised by producers. A strategy, he suggests, is the ‘proper’ restricting order which begs for interaction from outside of it. In the context of the subject of this thesis, a strategy would be the structure of heteronormativity which permeates all of society. Earlier I drew on the work of Berlant and Warner to define heteronormativity as a top-down stronghold, one additional definition by queer theorists frames the concept with even more strategic aggression:

“[heteronormativity is] a regime that organizes sex, gender and sexuality in order to match heterosexual norms... a naturalizing force that is *based on the seductive coercive or violent character of social norms*” (do Mar Castro Varela *et al.* 2011: 11; emphasis added). In contrast, a tactic is a negotiation of the “organising regime” which cannot be pinpointed to one specific “spatial or institutional localization... The place of a tactic belongs to the other” (de Certeau 1984: xix). Moreover, a tactic can be described as a process that “constantly manipulate[s]... a calculated action (de Certeau 1984: xix, 37). The notion of queering, which I argue research participants do in their homes, fits this definition of tactics. It is not a physical thing, but rather is enacted by participants where the heteronormative domestic environment is countered through daily practices of homemaking. While strategies like urban planning, and the design of the built environment seek to control and restrict, consumers take a tactical nature and navigate space in ways that are freeing to the structure opposed upon them.

The project of showcasing how people (or as de Certeau puts it, consumers) tactically queer space is liberating and emancipatory. The work on cruising for public sex has found this argument particularly useful. Referring to de Certeau’s street walker whose inhabitation of urban space creates his or her own textual narrative, queer theorist Mark W. Turner remarks in his book *Backward Glances: Cruising the Queer Streets of New York and London*:

The cruiser, I suggest, is one of the alternate ways of reading the urban street walker who exists in an environment of uncertain, ambiguous signification. Like every other street walker, the cruiser writes his own text of the city, but it may be a text not all of us can read equally... The cruiser positively *longs* to be seen, but not by everyone, and not in all streets (Turner 2003: 36).

The cruiser may rarely if ever be spotted by the mainstream, but one's covert actions subvert the intentions of designed space. Scholar Sant Suwatcharapinun has also advanced this point. In his study of male prostitution in Bangkok he notes: "in light of Michel de Certeau's spatial practices of strategy and tactic, Thai gay men behave 'tactically' in order to challenge such norms...". Put another way: "Cruising as a specific urban practices used by gay men is a tactic of resisting the heterosexual order of public space" (Suwatcharapinun 2005: 171, 193). As a tactic cruising has a real-world lesson for activism, that is, it provides an example of a queer political approach: those who do it work to queer the restricting order of space. Following this line of thought, but moving indoors to the domestic sphere, this project aims to show a similar tactical approach apparent in queer homemaking. Architects Benjamin Gianni and Scott Weir loosely followed De Certeau's line of thought and sought to show the agency queering allows in domestic space. In their 1994 exhibition, *Queers in (Single-Family) Space*, they suggested the flexibility of the designed domestic spaces they presented corresponds to the looseness of 'queer', which after all is a "strategy" (de Certeau would say tactic): "Sexuality exceeds the purview of the architect", rather queerness "is more a strategy than a space" (Gianni *et al.* 1995: 57; cited in Castiglia and Reed 2012: 75).

Like the pedestrians in De Certeau's analysis of New York City (de Certeau 1984: chapter seven) who appropriate space in their own way against the intentions of authority as they move through the city, LGBTQ people in London manipulate the overarching structure of heteronormativity imposed on them by society. Celebrating the everydayness of queering, similar to de Certeau's framework of tactical agency, is an important component in the potential emancipation from controlled heteronormativity:

Dwelling, moving about, speaking, reading, shopping and cooking are activities that seem to correspond to the characteristics of tactical ruses and surprises: clever tricks of the "weak" within the order established by the "strong," an art of putting one over... (de Certeau 1984: 40).

'Queering the home' unfolds in manifold and unexpected ways. The in-depth interviews from which I draw show that homemaking processes work towards challenging heteronormativity in extraordinary, complex, contradictory and even

subtle ways. Queering is not simply about making overt changes to home. Some LGBTQ Londoners visibly display their sexuality within their home, for example by putting up pictures of erotic art or photographs of same-sex partners or leaving out gay periodicals and books, while others do not. Notably, though, none of the instances of more visible queering included modifications to the building façade or to the internal arrangement of the home: the architecture itself works as a container for the tactical display of queering heteronormativity.

Out of the participants that foreground their sexuality at home, in all but one case this was done in what might be considered minor ways, which meant that queering could be removed out of sight with little effort. This flies in the face of much queer architectural scholarship which often suggest that there is a unified ‘queer aesthetic’ that consists of high-modernist materials including glass and mirrors. In addition, the queering done by those who foreground their sexuality was only done within the private space of the home. Standing on the pavement facing the front façade, one is given no hint that a queer home exists beyond the front door: for instance, nobody flew a rainbow flag. This relates to anthropologist Daniel Miller’s findings in his book *The Comfort of Things* (2008). Through looking at life narratives and the everyday stuff that makes up home on one street in south London, Miller found: “One house gives no clue at all as to what you will find in the next and there is rarely much orientation to the street itself”. And looking into several houses and the possessions in them one begins to “appreciate the diversity and creativity of contemporary London” (Miller 2008: 5; 7). The frontispiece photograph in this thesis – a Victorian-terraced street in London wherein sexuality is not conveyed to the viewer in clear ways, e.g. with the rainbow flag – speaks to Miller’s findings and my argument that LGBTQ Londoners are queering the heteronormative home through discrete homemaking practices which largely remain indoors (although there may be personalised and hidden ways identity plays out on the façade).

Presenting queering home as internal to the building and therefore private does not mean the affective power to destabilise ideology remains indoors and muted. Feminist Carol Hanisch’s 1969 maxim “The Personal is Political” has been taken up widely within feminist discourse (Hanisch 1969). Following Hanisch, feminist theory found ways to break down the separate spheres ideology that exists in our culture. This ideology sees public space as the place of production, run and dominated by males, the place where politics unfolds, in contrast to private space, which is viewed as the place of reproduction, where women tend to children and

housework in a domain separate from politics. Many feminist writers have continued to follow Hanisch's thinking by suggesting we take our politics with us as we navigate a path between both inside and outside of home. Human geographers Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling, for instance, observe, that "Home is neither public nor private but both. Home is not separated from public, political worlds but is constituted through them: the domestic is created through the extra-domestic and vice versa" (Blunt and Dowling 2006: 27). Architectural historians have also shown that interior domestic space is a representation of public, private and personal notions of self (*e.g.* Rice 2004). In other words, the divide between inside and outside is tenuous with both playing a role in how we shape our identities and create our homes (Gorman-Murray 2012 also offers a discussion of the ways in which, for gay men, home is politicised through public-private interchange). Therefore I would argue if public discourse can have an outside-in effect and shape normative concepts of home, then equally a study of the queering of home might work in some small way towards reforming normative ideals from inside-out.

LGBTQ homes exist alongside 'normalised' understandings of home but are not necessarily visible in the ways that queer scholarship has led us to expect. And in fact many participants, notably older ones, feel this aspect of their identity is not displayed through homemaking processes. This, then, presents the deepest layer of complication to my argument that LGBTQ Londoners are queering the heteronormative home. These participants, who proudly identify with their sexual identity, suggested that they have no need to relate to their sexuality in the homemaking process or otherwise at home; but they *do* enact same-sex desire and LGBTQ identity *i.e.* they share a home with a partner, invite friends into the space, or simply live as an out person. These participants insist that their home is the same as any other home, LGBTQ occupied or otherwise. Research participant Dale, for instance, emphasises that his home is "not some sort of seventies gay bar, it's just a house" (interview 20 January 2011). I suggest these narratives not only show the varied ways identity plays out, but they work to challenge limiting views of queer domesticity held in society generally and in architectural literature specifically. Simply put, to show, for instance, that LGBTQ occupied homes might look not dissimilar to a straight home challenges presumptions on a number of levels and it urges a more detailed investigation of the way multiple subject positions work to create space.

Through making visible queering processes, my approach is one that allows the voice of the occupant and his or her domesticity to be conveyed to the reader. The queering of contemporary domestic space is only understood through listening to the occupants who inhabit these everyday spaces. Thus interviewing is the key methodology that allows me to uncover the ways in which LGBTQ Londoners are queering heteronormativity at home. In light of the interviews this thesis relies on, I want to draw attention to architectural history which has made a case for participant-led methodologies and which shows the importance of everyday life in the production of the built environment. Architect and theorist Jonathan Hill argues architects are not the sole producers of space. In his edited collection, *Occupying Architecture*, Hill writes:

In architecture there are two occupations. First, the activities of the architect, and second, the actions of the user. The architect and user both produce architecture, the former by design, the latter by inhabitation. As architecture is experienced, the user has as creative a role as the architect (Hill 1998: 140).

But traditionally architectural discourse has not treated both parties as equal. Instead, Hill suggests, a problematic binary exists. The humanist legacy of seeking absolute truth has played its role in widespread oppression: it established dualisms “each with a ‘superior’ and ‘inferior’ component that define each other” (Hill 1998: 8). Examples include white/black, male/female and heterosexuality/homosexuality; in each case one subject dominates and defines the other – through what it is not. Architecture has traditionally followed this thinking which positions the occupant as inferior to the architect (Hill 1998: 8). Hill suggests that one way this binary might be challenged and therefore transform architectural practice is with the action of ‘illegal architects’, non-professional architects or users that create spaces by ignoring established codes and laws (Hill 1998: 10). One can draw parallels between the theorisation of ‘illegal architects’ and the subversive and empowering nature that exists in the act of queering heteronormativity at home. It is through querying who the key players are in architecture and the challenge this offers to normative disciplinary understandings that interests my argument and the thesis, which, after all, is written from within an architecture school.

By looking to everyday users of the built environment, or ‘illegal architects’, Hill builds on the work of French philosophers and theorists who look to the production of everyday space, including Roland Barthes, De Certeau and Henri Lefebvre. The latter writer has particularly influenced architectural discourse. In *The*

Production of Space (published in 1974 in French and 1991 in English) Lefebvre argues that space in itself is not something that can be studied, it is not a starting point: it does not exist in itself, but is produced by people (not dissimilar to heteronormative oppression). Space, he believes, is the reality of the production of social interaction between humans: or, to quote architectural historian Iain Borden, “space is part of a dialectical process between itself and human agency; rather than an *a priori* entity space is produced by, and productive of, social being” (Borden 2001: 11). And as Baydar puts it: “space is never a homogenous, unified, neutral and *a priori* entity that precedes subjects but emerges as the outcome of an ongoing production process which involves actors and material components” (Baydar 2012: 699).

Many scholars from various disciplines have drawn from Lefebvre’s writings on the social production of space. Warner also uses Lefebvre’s work to advance his radical argument that sexual minorities (although he mainly refers to gay men) must embrace shame in order to counter heteronormative urban space. Paraphrasing a passage from *The Production of Space* (Lefebvre 1991: 191–192), Warner builds on the agency such a theorisation offers: “the organization of urban space is undertaken by the city’s users – not its planners, builders, owners, or rulers”. Therefore the drivers of everyday interactions, “waste, play, and sex” (what Warner suggests are the actions gay men must embrace), are inseparable from the production of social space (Warner 1999: 192). Thus like de Certeau’s theory and its subsequent application to urban cruisers, Lefebvre offers a framework for queer studies scholars to argue that those who engage in public sex and gay shame can equally subvert heteronormativity. In the next section I expand on the notion of gay shame and the benefits that embracing it has for a queer politic, similarly in chapter two I offer a longer contextualisation of Warner’s argument and radical stance, but for now I want to draw from one further scholar who has relied heavily on Lefebvre’s social production of space and who also focuses on spaces minorities inhabit – albeit a very different group and space: skateboarders (after introducing the work and specificity I acknowledge the distinctions between these two very different groups).

In his text on skateboarders Borden uses Lefebvre to show the multiple ways users create space. Borden notes that traditional architectural history – that which has focused on “the labour process of architectural production, the institution of the profession, biographical histories, patrons, education and architectural theory”

– replicates the spatial division between individual professions (Borden 2001: 7). He substantiates this claim by quoting Lefebvre:

In short, where for example the space of the body is seen to be the province of medicine, and the space of the landscape as the province of geography, so the space of the built environment is seen to be the province of architecture and, more specifically, of architects and planners. In doing so, architectural historians limit their conception of architectural space to the space of the designed building-object – a fetishism that erases social relations and wider meanings (Lefebvre 1991: 89–91; cited in Borden 2001: 7).

Questioning tradition, Borden calls for moving away from understanding architecture as buildings and toward a definition which questions representation by taking into account the reproduction and experience of architecture (Borden 2001: 8). Borden continues to define architecture, not as an object but a matrix of social interaction:

architecture is not an object with a role to play, but is constituted by the discourses and practices of social life. Architecture is not an object but a process, not a thing but a flow, not an abstract idea but a lived thought (Borden 2001: 9).

Following on from this, I understand domestic space existing, not because an architect designed it and a contractor built the structure, but rather because it is inhabited by occupants, who conduct a wide range of homemaking practices that work to queer heteronormativity.

Borden uses his architectural history to give extensive agency to the skateboarder. They use their body and its apparatus to respond to the infinite possibilities of everyday space; they rethink “architecture as a set of discrete features and elements, and recompos[e] it through new speeds, spaces and times during their run through the city” (Borden 2001: 263). Thus as a result, the traditional binary of architect/user is collapsed into one figure and as a result the object of architecture is rethought: “user and architecture come together to create a new spatial event, an occupied territory. Architecture is at once erased and reborn in the phenomenal act of the skater’s move” (Borden 2001: 107). Borden proposes an architectural history that challenges the restrictive subject/object binary. Despite clear differences in research focus – looking at transgressive, public and largely urban space compared to private domestic space – Borden is one scholar who shows the value in recognising the users of everyday space who through their occupation create architecture. In this context, relying on interviewing as a main methodology in a research project – as discussed in more detail in chapter one – that seeks to show how LGBTQ Londoners are queering heteronormativity at home begins to make sense. Interviewing allows for subjective experiences and personalised homemaking practices to be foregrounded, giving

agency to LGBTQ users of everyday domestic space. Interview methodologies allow me to construct an argument that foregrounds the subversive political activism apparent in queering the home.

Politics, queering and queer are intimately connected. While theorists have highlighted the limitations of identity politics around the use of queer, discussed earlier in this section, the fact remains that some sexual minorities – including interviewees from this research (and not just gay men) – use it to describe their identity, which draws on the political history where the term was and still is used to signify one's radicalness or desire for distinction. My preference for the acronym LGBTQ speaks to the link between politics and identity constructs. It is an acronym that relates to the interviewees in this research, where all participants self-identified within one of the five categories of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer. Finding a suitable way to describe the people queer studies covers has been an on-going challenge, but LGBTQ allows for sensitivity to identity constructs and political agency. However, in using this acronym to refer to my cohort of research participants, I acknowledge that there are clear lines of division between each of these identity categories (a collective LGBTQ community is something that I complicate in the next section). Experiences of home in history have been, and continue to be, distinct for lesbians compared to gay men; similarly trans people have negotiated their minority identity in ways which likely contrast bisexuals' relationship to home. Gender in particular is a category of identity which clearly relates to the unique experiences between LGBTQ, both in public spaces but also at home. Along with the above discussion of gender playing out in the patriarchal and heteronormative home, the feminist literature I cite in chapter two also highlights challenges women have had to face in the domestic sphere. Along with lesbian women, transgender people have found experiences of gender to be frequently foregrounded at home; and in some transcripts issues of gender are discussed rather than sexuality *per se*. While acknowledging the importance of differences, I did not set myself the task of characterizing the distinctions between the L and the G and the B and the T and the Q – to do so would have demanded a far greater pool of participants than I was drawing upon here. Instead, my aim at this stage was simply to show that sexuality plays out at home in incredibly diverse ways. Therefore in using LGBTQ I observe that sexuality is multifaceted and complicated. Similarly, in this thesis 'queer' takes on multiple meanings: I use queer and queering as both an

identity construct based around sexuality as well as a stance and politic. In the next section I stress the political potency of queer/queering in the thesis argument.

A domestic approach to queer activism

Suggesting a domestic approach to queer politics raises some issues that I discuss in this section. It is my intention to engage up front in the dissertation with potential concerns and criticisms, which might be made particularly by some queer theorists who have taken a different political approach and identified very different spaces as crucial sites for challenging hetero norms. In particular, I anticipate that some will regard this work as assimilationist in nature, as a result of its domestic focus, as well as the fact that in the empirical chapters I go on to celebrate the varied ways Londoners are queering heteronormativity through homemaking processes – which includes some participants completely rejecting aspects of LGBTQ identity. However, before getting to the nuances of the argument it is first imperative to trace a transition in queer politics that has ultimately allowed me to take a domestic approach.

“I am forty-four years old, I have lived through a startling transformation in the status of gay men and women...” remarks *The New Yorker* journalist and music critic Alex Ross in his recent autobiographically-influenced essay “Love on the March: Reflections on the Gay Community’s Political Progress – and its Future” (Ross 2012: 45). Five years earlier historian Jeffrey Weeks had made a similar point: “We are living... in a world of transition, in the midst of a long, convoluted, messy, unfinished but profound revolution that has transformed the possibilities of living our sexual diversity and creating intimate lives” (Weeks 2007: 3). As these two writers emphasise, over the past four decades the social acceptability of LGBTQ identity has improved dramatically in the ‘West’, particularly in some urban centres including London. But these gains have created their own tensions. In particular, they have raised the concern that the queer political movement is becoming diffused, indistinct, and complacent – in a word, ordinary – thus risking that the difficulties and struggles of those who have come before will be forgotten. In the 1970s and 1980s the queer political movement saw a public declaration of homosexuality, one that rejected heterosexuality and all its trappings; for many this included conventional domesticity, marriage, monogamy, and respectability. In the face of the AIDS crisis and its widespread homophobic vitriol, however, the movement started to see a divergence. For advocacy groups like ACT UP this meant more public radical

demonstrations were needed. In their view, keeping quiet or being invisible is dangerous because it may lead to assimilation (Sinfield 1998: 8). Queer theorists started to investigate the question of assimilation and what it meant for the movement. As discussed in more depth in chapter two, Warner was one of the leaders in this effort: in the 1990s he argued that sexual minorities should reject marriage, reject assimilation, avoid becoming ‘normal’ and instead celebrate the things that have mattered to our collective gay past – public sex, indecency and shame.

Reflecting on the dangers of forgetting queer history has become a dominant theme of recent literature. In *The World We Have Won* Weeks formulated the problem like this:

Without understanding the present we are in a poor position to take hold of the future. Without a sense of history, and an understanding of the ways we lived then, we have no benchmarks by which to measure what has changed, no means of grasping the magnitude of the dramatic shifts that have taken place over the past sixty years in this world we have won (Weeks 2007: IX).

Therefore it has become an issue of responsibility: a “sense of the past holds the present to account...” (Weeks 2007: 3). Historians Christopher Castiglia and Reed in their book, *If Memory Serves: Gay Men, AIDS and the Promise of the Queer Past*, push this even further. They suggest that the first wave of queer theory “arose at a particular moment... [which was an effort to counter] the general unremembering that took hold in the aftershock of the first years of AIDS” (Castiglia and Reed 2012: 5). Thus the authors try to reclaim the political activism and social justice goal apparent in remembering. Memory, they point out, can be reparative: “A culture, that is, can be reparative in its collective memories, its desire being to repair the present rather than faithfully to restore the past” (Castiglia and Reed 2012: 13). Like Warner and others, Castiglia and Reed suggest the price of assimilation tends to be forgetting the past, and this is problematic:

The signs of these losses are everywhere: in the monopoly of “gay marriage”... in the assimilation of sexual minorities and the subsequent abandonment of supposedly restrictive gay “ghettos”; in the insistent invisibility of AIDS or sexual liberation in popular media; in the dearth of radical, public, and collective challenges to mainstream institutions (Castiglia and Reed 2012: 9).

I agree that it is important to remember the past – indeed I draw links to particularly the British queer past on several occasions throughout this thesis, especially in chapter four – but one of the contentions I have with scholars that make this argument is the polarity of their approach. Even in their culturally sensitive text,

Castiglia and Reed hint that one is either *for* queer politics and a remembering of the past, or one is an assimilationist *against* it and abandons its history by setting up a home and aspiring to ‘normal’ sexuality and domesticity. They note:

When young Americans today say that sexuality “just doesn’t matter,” it is often heralded as a progressive triumph. But Sexuality *should* matter: it should be the thrilling, dangerous, unpredictable, imaginative force it once was and no doubt still is... If sexuality does not matter anymore, it is not because we won but because of how much we have lost (Castiglia and Reed 2012: 9).

In the same way that Castiglia and Reed suggest visibility is an important part of remembering and holding on to the notion of a queer community, so too does queer theorist David Halperin. In his provocative book *How to be Gay* (2012) – named after a course of the same name he taught at the University of Michigan – Halperin makes the case that male gayness is not simply about same-sex attraction, but about an initiation into a long-established gay male culture – something that many would find controversial. In naming his course and book he investigates “the very notion that there’s a right way to be gay” (Halperin 2012: 35). His investigation of gay male culture begins by looking at the generational differences that exist and have existed for decades where younger gay people – Halperin included in his youth – have in the past defined themselves (and continue to define themselves) “by *rejecting* the gay culture of previous generations – by rejecting *gay culture* itself – as hopelessly anachronistic and out of touch, as a substitute for the real thing [gay sex]” (Halperin 2012: 41; emphases in original). Halperin eventually surrendered to gay culture’s charm and in the book argues that gay men need to acknowledge the culture that binds us in order to confront and challenge the embarrassment and shame that haunts our past:

so long as we cling to the notion that gayness is reducible to same-sex sexual object-choice, that it has nothing to do with how we live or what we like, that our homosexuality is completely formed prior to and independent of any exposure to gay culture – and so long as we hold to that belief as to a kind of dogma – then the persistence of gay culture will remain a perpetual embarrassment... (Halperin 2012: 61).

The problem, Halperin suggests, is that in an effort to become ‘normal’ people are “eras[ing] the specificity and distinctiveness of queer life, thereby denying its ability to contribute anything of value to the world we live in”. This allows him to observe:

We are witnessing the rise of a new and vehement cult of gay ordinariness... gay people lately have begun preening themselves on their dullness, commonness, averageness. A noticeable aggressiveness has started to inform their insistence on how boring they are, how conventional, how completely indistinguishable from everyone else (Halperin 2012: 443).

While I see the point that by overemphasising fitting in, gay men (and similarly other sexual minorities) might reject the history that binds them, we can also acknowledge that subjectivity and culture is much more complicated than this reduction allows. There is a chance that gay culture could percolate into sexual minorities' lives and homes and evolve in any number of ways. In this thesis a gay or queer culture is shown to exist in and play a role on the homemaking process for some participants, but if others reject it (as some interviewees do) then I would argue that decision needs to be understood as a political act in and of itself (I come back to this below). For now, I would like to turn to Halperin's argument that gay male culture should reinvest value in its most repudiated features, those that, for some, result in feelings of shame. Engaging with the discourse of gay shame is particularly important for this thesis not only because experiences of shame and pride have shifted resulting from the transition that has taken place in queer politics, but also because some might feel that in taking a domestic approach I am positioning myself in a binary with those that embrace the radicalness of shame.

There has been a substantial amount of literature which looks at the affect of shame, its relationship to queer identity and its political force. Halperin took up the topic in his co-edited book, with queer theorist Valerie Traub, aptly titled *Gay Shame* (2009). The text comes out of the long history of queer politics both within and outside of academia using gay pride as the driving force, which "require[s] nothing less than the complete destigmatization of homosexuality, which means the elimination of both the personal and the social shame attached to same-sex eroticism" (Halperin and Traub 2009: 3). Thus embracing shame allows for another political approach that seeks to include all those people that do not neatly fit into the identities that pride tends to cater for: shame offers a resistance to both queer normalisation and heteronormativity. The authors suggest they are not arguing for a rejection of gay pride but an opening up of it: "the only kind of gay pride that is enduring is a gay pride that does not forget its origins in shame, that is still powered by the transformative energies that spring from experiences of shame" (Halperin 2009: 44). However, one gets the distinct feeling that the book's contributors are in fact rejecting pride that does not originate in shame. Take the cover for instance, which consists of a full page image of Catherine Opie's photograph titled *Ron Athey/Pearl Necklace* (2000), in which long beads of pearls fall out of Athey's anus. Clearly the authors are using the political force of gay shame related to embarrassment of anal sex, among others, in a confrontation to the normalising

effects of not only gay identity, but also the academe, publishing companies and library institutions.⁵ The message is that one must be either *for* or *against* shame. As one academic noted in his review of the book, its thrust is that “Gay shame should be unleashed upon a series of bad queers, precisely because they have become acceptable gays” (Stepien 2012: 144).

The political potency of shame was first noted in a queer context by Sedgwick in her widely-cited journal article in the first issue of *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*. In “Queer Performativity: Henry James’s the *Art of the Novel*” (Sedgwick 1993a; reproduced in Sedgwick 2003) she argued that shame is the link between queer identity and the political power of performative gender theory – briefly, the notion that all identities are a cultural performance rooted in time – which had been recently introduced by queer theorist Judith Butler (1990a; 1990b) (discussed in chapter two). Sedgwick notes: “shame is the affect that mantles the threshold between introversion and extroversion, between absorption and theatricality... shame... *is performance*” (Sedgwick 2003: 38; emphasis in original). Thinking of performativity in terms of habitual shame offers, Sedgwick suggests, new and wide-reaching opportunities to the problem of identity politics (Sedgwick 2003: 62). Thus shame is performativity, identity (both personal and collective) and resistance.

To make this argument Sedgwick drew on the psychological literature, particularly that of American psychologist Sylvan Tompkins (1922–1991) who looked extensively at the affect of shame.⁶ This allowed Sedgwick to assert that “in the developmental process, shame is now often considered the affect that most defines the space wherein a sense of self will develop...” (Sedgwick 2003: 37). In psychoanalytical terms, “one’s very personality or character is a record of the history

⁵ At the British Library in central London this book has a large red “restricted stock” label across the cover. When I enquired about this, a staff member informed me that this is the standard procedure so readers do not get offended. Thus one can see that the challenges gay shame is up against.

⁶ For the affective literature on shame, particularly Tompkins life work, see Sedgwick and Frank 1995 (especially chapter six “Shame-Humiliation and Contempt-Disgust”) as well as Sedgwick and Frank 2003. In the former, Sedgwick and Frank reproduce abridged passages from Tompkins’s substantial four volume text *Affect, Imagery Consciousness* (1962–1991). In this literature it is clear that Tompkins’s work on the human affect of shame was the result of his desire to reduce human suffering. “Shame theory”, he suggests, “is one such source of great power and generality in activating shame, in alerting the individual to the possibility or imminence of shame and in providing standardized strategies for minimizing shame”. Thus recognising shame theory and its effects can teach us to avoid future shaming: “Just as human beings can learn to avoid danger, to shun the flame before one is burnt, so also can they learn to avoid shame or fear before they are seared by the experience of such negative affect” (Sedgwick and Frank 1995: 165, 166). The effect of Tompkins’s desire to use shame theory to minimise human suffering influenced Sedgwick in a similar way of improving social justice, but one with a different outcome.

of the ways that the emotion of shame has structured one's relations to others and to oneself" (Halperin 2009: 42). The conclusion this allows for is that if shame is part of identity for some queer people, as Sedgwick suggests it is, then it must not be rejected – as in the work of psychologists David J. Allen and Terry Oleson who offer a scientific attempt at finding and reducing key factors in experiences of shame among gay men (Allen and Oleson 1999). Rather, Sedgwick argues, shame must be embraced for its transformative powers:

“[T]herapeutic or political strategies aimed directly at getting rid of individual or group shame, or undoing it, have something preposterous about them... The forms taken by shame are not distinct “toxic” parts of a group or individual identity that can be excised; they are instead integral to and residual in the processes by which identity itself is formed. They are available for the work of metamorphosis, reframing, refiguration, *transfiguration*, affective and symbolic loading and deformation... (Sedgwick 2003: 62–63; italics in original).

Queer theorists since Sedgwick have offered similar yet distinct arguments calling for an embrace of shame, seeing it in a positive light. For instance gender historian and sociologist Elspeth Probyn observes that shame holds a positive role in our lives because when we are shamed it forces us to involuntarily evaluate ourselves, asking “why am I ashamed”: “Shame in this way is positive in its self-evaluative role; it can be self-transforming. This is possible, however, only where shame is acknowledged” (Probyn 2005: xii–xiii). To embrace shame, then, can have the advantage of affording us the “opportunity to reflect on what makes us different and the same”; in short, what makes us human (Probyn 2005: xv). In *Queer Attachments: The Cultural Politics of Shame* (2008), queer theorist Sally Munt extends this further by looking at three inter-related groups – the poor, the queer and the Irish Catholic – and their oppression from hegemony. Looking to how shame plays such an ingrained process in the ‘West’, starting in Christianity with the Fall of Man, Munt urges us to “reconsider shame and accept its role in our self-identifications and attachments” – in other words “to reclaim, embrace and possibly transgress or move beyond shame in a reparative gesture towards self-healing” (Giffney 2008: X). Munt’s social justice contribution is evident in this query of shame: “Shame has a political potential as it can provoke a separation between the social convention demarcated within hegemonic ideals, enabling a re-inscription of social intelligibility”. This can result in greater rights and equality for minority people:

The outcome of this can be radical, instigating social, political and cultural agency amongst the formerly disenfranchised. When you no longer care that

you are being shamed, particularly when horizontal bonds formed through communities of shame can be transmuted into collective desires to claim a political presence and a legitimate self, that new sense of identity can forge ahead and gain rights and protection (Munt 2008: 4).

Warner, in *The Trouble with Normal* (1999), makes a similar plea.

One of the reasons he makes an argument to embrace sexual indignity is because it offers “an ethical response to the problem of shame”. Warner observes: “The difficult question is not: how do we get rid of our sexual shame?... The question, rather, is this: what will we do with our shame? And the usual response is pin it on someone else” (Warner 1999: 3). In the following passage one can see that Warner takes an aggressive approach:

On top of having ordinary sexual shame, and on top of having shame for being gay, the dignified homosexual also feels ashamed of every queer who flaunts his sex and his faggotry... What’s a poor homosexual to do? Pin it on the fuckers who deserve it: sex addicts, body builders... people with HIV, anyone who magnetizes the stigma you can’t shake (Warner 1999: 32).

Thus Warner believes it is more ethical to counter assimilation and reject becoming ‘normal’ – to embrace dignity in sexual shame which has been at the heart of gay politics from the past four decades. Doing so will remove the damaging hierarchies of shaming and improve social justice for those further down the ladder of respectability who are oppressed in a number of ways.

Another scholar who offers a similar argument to the above which makes the case for embracing shame in order to reinvest queer theory with a radical transformative urgency is queer theorist Douglas Crimp. In his essay originally published in *Regarding Sedgwick: Essays on Queer Culture and Critical Theory* (Barber and Clark 2002), but reprinted in *Gay Shame*, and which played an important role at its conference, Crimp argues “[t]he sad thing about the contemporary politics of gay and lesbian pride is... [that it] sees shame as conventional indignity rather than the affective substrate necessary to the transformation of one’s distinctiveness into a queer kind of dignity” (Crimp 2009: 72). Thus embracing gay shame is a convincing and enticing argument.

The above discussion offers a glimpse into the body of literature on shame, which has been necessary in order to contextualise the changing lives and the ways in which *all* sexual minorities in the ‘West’ experience sexuality. However, much of the existing work has focused on gay men and certainly more is needed to understand how diverse sexual minorities experience shame in distinct ways. Future literature might uncover different modes of experiencing shame and even find fractures within

the LGBTQ community – like all affects, shame will play out in distinct ways for diverse subjectivities. Moreover, new research could explicitly look at experiences of shame in and across the domestic/extra-domestic binary (I return to this in the concluding chapter). Three scholars that have managed to show various marginalised groups’ experiences of shame are: Munt’s previously noted study (which also draws on her own negotiation of lesbian identity in a context of shame); Probyn’s above outlined work which highlights various marginalised groups’ experiences of shame, including aboriginals (see also Probyn 2004 where she considers postcolonial societies); and finally human geographer Lynda Johnston’s (2007) paper on lesbian and queer women participating in Pride Scotland. Johnston study is particular relevant here for two reasons. First, in an ethnographic study of drumming in the pride parade, which shows that her paper is not just theoretical in nature, she highlights the gendering of shame and pride. And second, her study offers embodied examples of the ways in which pride parades are simultaneously performances of shame (Sedgwick 2003: 38) and pride – this has the advantage of “mov[ing] beyond a binary understanding of pride and shame as separate entities” (Johnston 2007: 33).

Despite more research needed to fill in gaps in the research, queer theorists have shown the political potential of shame. Moreover, the immediacy of its effect is clear: finding dignity in shame is something everyone can do on a personal level and the results will lead to large-scale community change. But as mentioned at the beginning of this section, there is a transition taking place in queer politics. To embrace shame is one response that in many ways came out of the 1980s/1990s AIDS crisis and was a particular strategy to counter the moralistic backlash; while that was an expedient response – and remains a valid one which some scholars continue to propagate – the changes in queer experience over time has meant that not all people identify with this approach. In *Gay and After* queer theorist Alan Sinfield made the brave statement that perhaps “we may be growing out of ‘gay’”. Suddenly, improbably, we are in a position to envisage a new refocusing of sexual dissidence for the next millennium” (Sinfield 1998: 1). Put another way, following the poststructuralist frame of mind which challenges facts and existing knowledge, Sinfield suggested in 1998 that ‘gay’ might be read as a historical construct that suited earlier periods but it may now be hindering us more than helping us: “we may now be entering the period of *the post-gay* – a period when it will not seem so necessary to define, and hence to limit, our sexualities” (Sinfield 1998: 5, 14; emphasis in original). Although Sinfield’s argument is now fifteen years old, I agree

with his observation that “gay sexuality is not an inevitably cohesive force. It too is diverse: *there are different kinds of homosexuality*” (Sinfield 1998: 193; emphasis added). But what binds us is “[o]ur apparent unity... in the shared condition of being *not-heterosexual*” (Sinfield 1998: 193; emphasis in original).

Sinfield’s argument does what I hope to do in this thesis. It refuses to accept the dichotomies that queer scholarship establishes when it insists upon an embrace of shame: dichotomies between differentiation/assimilation, then/now, public/private, radical/domestic, shame/pride, queer/normal and even gay/post-gay. Accepting such dichotomies leaves little room for nuance and does not map onto the complex ways most of my research participants identified their own position. Although I agree that to suggest “sexuality just isn’t that important” (as some of my participants do) is troubling in the context of queer politics, the fact remains that many people *feel* this way: is it culturally responsible for queer scholars to suggest these LGBTQ experiences are problematic? More importantly, is it appropriate for theorists to dictate how sexuality should be experienced through words like “thrilling, dangerous, [and] unpredictable” (Castiglia and Reed 2012: 9)? In my view, it is necessary for queer theory to acknowledge that there are a plurality of experiences of sexuality with none more or less important than the other; to do this is admittedly a challenge, but it will recognise the diverse subjectivities under the discipline’s coverage.

Thus, we arrive at the crux of my position on the state of queer politics in the contemporary moment which informs the domestic argument I put forward. The transition which on the surface results in a loss of cohesion is not something that needs to be lamented and feared, but rather it can be embraced for its advantages: the community is *diverse* in its diversity. I would argue that at the moment queer politics is in its most exciting and wide-reaching phase. While it is important to recognise the culture that binds our shared history, as well as the loss and adversity that affected the gay community in the past, equally, there needs to be room in queer theory and politics for a domestic approach where LGBTQ identity at home is recognised. The challenge for queer theory is to embrace all of these possibilities and to remember that identity is not a static thing: one may travel back and forth at various points in the day, year or lifespan across any space or political agenda. Thus I argue for a queering of queer theory where the multiplicities of our shared non-heterosexual identity might operate in parallel.

Importantly, I do not intend to suggest that there is no longer a need for political activism in the public realm, or for more radical forms of activism. Rather, I argue there is now, more than ever, a need for *multiple* types of activism, which is why this thesis attempts to contribute modestly to an alternative method. There are clearly many reasons for queer political activism in early 2013: HIV infection rates among gay men hit an all-time high in the UK in 2011, with 3,010 people newly infected (Anon 2012a); despite legal improvements to equality, there have been a number of vicious homophobic attacks in London and elsewhere in the UK in recent years; mental health is an increasingly important issue for LGBTQ people, with charities like PACE set up to offer a place to turn to; child and teen bullying is a frequent issue fellow volunteers and I deal with at the London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard; teen suicides among sexual minorities are an all too common occurrence, which the “it gets better” campaign featuring celebrities seeks to combat; trans people continue to face a host of challenges both socially and legally; and there remains terrifyingly violent oppression in other parts of the world including the Caribbean, Africa and the Middle East where LGBTQ people face ostracisation and even death. There needs to be a way to fight for equality and social justice across the board, which includes the above pressing issues, as well as those more domestically-focused.

Perhaps not surprisingly, I also take issue with the queer position which holds that same-sex marriage is the ‘wrong’ issue to fight for. In chapter two I highlight Warner’s contribution to this argument, but earlier in this introduction Castiglia and Reed were quoted as suggesting this constitutes a loss of focus (Castiglia and Reed 2012: 9). Gay marriage is not only about equality for same-sex couples, but about many other things as well: the wider social acceptance of sexual minorities (see Smith 2010 who offers a critical discussion of how same-sex marriage might actually enable gender and sexual equality); the right for trans people who have sexual reassignment surgery to stay married to their spouse and not require going through divorce (something one of the participants in this study had to go through); the right to allow property and final wishes to be placed with one’s partner; the right for all legally wed people to use the same terminology; and finally the *legitimisation* of a type of queer home. The fact that the current UK government has promised to bring in same-sex marriage is about recognising these rights and many more that go unmentioned. It is about giving same-sex couples and queer family homes the same rights that have been devoted to heterosexuals for centuries. The home and the right

to make home, which in rhetoric is one of the foundations of society, historically excludes LGBTQ people, as discussed earlier: the patriarchal and heterosexual home is built on conjugality, the heterosexual couple living together. Although history cannot be changed, political ambitions can certainly alter the future. Thus the issue of marriage is a critical one to this thesis, but not the only one. If queer (the identity construct and the political movement), as I understand it, is about opening up, evolving, and accepting the diversity of the community, then surely there must be room for multiple trajectories where politics is brought home to a wide variety of people. Thus the politic of my focus is about multiplicity: we need to be able to fight for issues that affect the home, particularly for those people that are more domestically-oriented, without casting them as assimilationists or ‘normalisers’, but equally there needs to be sustained growth on political issues that might seemingly affect those beyond the front door. To suggest one is more important than the other is beside the point: we need to celebrate the multiplicity of queer.

By taking a domestic approach to queer politics, along with the above where I pointed out that I do not intend to suggest a diminished need for activism, another potential criticism needs to be discussed. In some of the homes that I research, I uncover the mundane ways in which LGBTQ Londoners queer heteronormativity; for some these include the complete rejection of anything related to sexual identity in the homemaking process wherein the home is asserted to be just like a ‘normal’ home. Thus one might wonder: if LGBTQ identity is so subtle that it is no longer visible, and if people are not all shouting in the streets “We’re here, we’re queer, get used to it”, but rather some prefer to be more domestic, what does that do for the community as a whole? What happens when the cohesiveness, which existed back in the 1990s, with regards to the AIDS backlash and the fight to overturn oppressive laws like Section 28 (contextualised in chapter four), falls away and no longer binds the LGBTQ community together? While acknowledging these fears, this thesis asserts that the diversity of experiences and subjectivity that is at the heart of LGBTQ identity – indeed we are all shaped by a multitude of subject positions based on class, race, sex, sexuality, desire, and wealth – is not a weakness. Sinfield concedes, rather, “[t]he task is not to imagine an exclusive group of like-minded people, but to build on the diverse strengths of our constituency, to enlarge it, and to politicise it” (Sinfield 1998: 199). An argument based on the domestic might seem to work towards breaking down an immediately visible community because it explores anonymous practices of inhabitation similar to that which LGBTQ Londoners were

not so long ago forced to inhabit (and still must resort to in other parts of the world). This, however, is not at all my intention. I reiterate that I hope to expand on, without distracting from, the larger queer politic. Bringing queer politics home builds on the longer transition taking place. “Attitudes have surely changed in fundamental ways”, remarks Weeks, “we are living now, clearly, in a different world” (Weeks 2007: 3). Resulting from this change in attitude and experiences, as suggested, my approach is to find a new way of complicating queer theory. This is why I tend to favour a sophisticated aphorism cited by Marinucci in her dedication to *Feminism is Queer*: “queer theory is the recognition that ‘shit’s complicated’ ” (Marinucci 2010: xv, citing personal communication with Krista Benson).

Relatedly, resulting from the transition in queer politics and the existing scholarly work, whilst reading through this thesis one may recognise a noticeable dearth of sex which some may suggest is an oversight. Frequent approaches, as shown, have sought to foreground sex in particular because of its role in destabilising heteronormativity in public space as well as in traditional academic research. I was eager to take a different path toward queering heteronormativity. In *Sex and Buildings* Williams draws out clear links between sex and architecture and he points out that “nearly all the historical literature on sex was informed by the belief that the built environment conditioned behaviour” (Williams 2013: 11). Sex is intimately related to sexuality, with the latter category pointing to a broader concept of identity shaped by multiple factors. Although I did not specifically ask questions about sex – which I could have done, as others might have – if sex was brought up in interviews I was careful to allow it to shape the chapter themes – and indeed it was foregrounded in relation to some domestic material culture and frequently in the interviews with domestic tradespeople. Moving away from a deliberate discussion of sex, I argue, can work to broaden the queer political project to include people that may not suggest it is a key part of LGBTQ sexuality, as many in the following chapters indicate.

It is my hope that the strength of the argument lies in its aspiration to widen queer politics to include a domestic approach. My use of the term ‘queer domesticity’, which builds on the earlier grammatical discussion of queer being both an identity politic and a process in the making of a LGBTQ occupied home, brings together most succinctly the political activism apparent in challenging heteronormativity. Ultimately the project is about bringing visibility to the internal and private act of queering heteronormativity. Although opening up queer politics

and theory to the domestic is the main goal, secondary to that, and more modestly, the thesis could even aspire to contribute to social change in some small way for LGBTQ people: specifically by giving agency to the political act of homemaking and foregrounding the omnipotence of heteronormativity. My argument is built on the fact that the home is a political site (see hooks 1990, which I also return to in chapter four, but also Gorman-Murray 2012). There are two players in bringing this politics to light: the participants, the ‘queerers’ of heteronormative domestic space, and myself, the researcher/writer/author who draws attention to this activity and aims to give it agency. I assert that *all* ways in which heteronormativity is being queered, from the more obvious, such as displaying homoerotic artwork, to the subdued, living with a same-sex partner or inviting friends into one’s home, are political acts. Even to reject sexuality altogether in the homemaking process, as some participants in this study do, is a political act in and of itself, which results from the transition in queer politics over the past four decades. I further admit that it is possible that some participants who maintain that their LGBTQ identity has nothing to do with their home may reject my assertion that their home or their homemaking is political. Following de Certeau, Lefebvre and Borden, among others, a key part of the political nature of this thesis is to make visible everyday acts of inhabiting space, and this may also result in participants disliking my insistence upon seeing heteronormativity everywhere and my belief that it continues to shape all experiences of home. But Along with TV, internet and phone offering entrance points, something as simple as a repair engineer coming into the home to fix an appliance or a government volunteer knocking on the door to collect statistics would show that no home goes untouched by heteronormativity. Because not everyone has the luxury or aspiration of rejecting aspects of their sexuality at home, celebrating the political agency of homemaking that challenges the all-encompassing nature of heteronormativity is important: even though some interviewees are not engaging in politics does not mean the need for politics disappears. There is a continuous need to improve equality for *all* sexual minorities at home and beyond.

Showing the complexity of LGBTQ identity at home is inspired by my desire to see queer politics be recognised as less peripheral to the heterosexual majority and to sexual minorities that are more domestically-oriented. As this thesis argues, the home is an important space for queer activism. It is not my intention to reinforce dichotomies that have been yoked to assimilationist/separatist arguments – to suggest one must be either for or against, for instance, shame or pride or displaying LGBTQ

culture in the home. Rather, my aim is to show that queer subjectivity and domesticity is much more diverse. It is also my hope, as suggested, that the project works towards the destabilisation of stereotypes surrounding queer domesticity. In the final section of chapter two I explicitly draw on stereotypical gay homes in order to then argue that the spaces in the subsequent chapters complicate the notion of a gay domestic aesthetic. Although it is my goal to disprove stereotypes informing the aesthetic of every queer domestic space, this is not to deny those who may identify with stereotypes in and beyond the home. I recognise that stereotypes have cultural significance and power that may work to shape these homes in ways that are not always apparent. There would be certainly LGBTQ homes in London that embrace stereotypes, and in many cases, including the homes in this research, notions of a gay domestic aesthetic likely inform the way home occupiers decorate, assess and differentiate their own domestic spaces. While stereotypes and ideologies of a queer domesticity may generate out of historical fact, in this thesis I am interested in everyday practices and lived experiences of a select group of Londoners, which present an alternative and diverse view of LGBTQ domesticity. I would postulate that a research project looking to heterosexual homes would equally show that cohorts' domestic spaces cannot be read in terms of a monolithic representation which normative ideologies work to construct. I am not alone in looking to ordinary spaces in order to destabilise stereotypes and ideologies.

In 1994 The Storefront for Art and Architecture, in New York, held what was arguably the first exhibition and academic spatial theorising of LGBTQ identity, fittingly called *Queer Space*. To celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Stonewall Inn uprising – which some believe started the gay rights movement (although see Chauncey 1994: 9, who argues this was one moment in a longer history) – the organisers of the event – which included, among others, Sedgwick, Colomina and fellow architectural historian Mark Wigley – arranged for thirteen projects to be shown in its gallery, which would “open up the question of queer space rather than pin it down” (Muschamp 1994; see also Sullivan 1994). Further, the aim of the exhibition was to “generate new ways of thinking about the social politics of space in the city” as well as to question stereotypes and prejudices (*Queer Space* 1994). Although only one of the entries looked to the domestic sphere, what it set out to do was commendable, especially given the political outrage that dominated the mid-1990s activism. In their *Family Values* project architects Gianni and Mark Robbins solicited snapshots of domestic spaces through gay periodicals in Ottawa, Ontario

and Columbus, Ohio. The project overview noted that the photographs work to breakdown myths associated with queer domesticity: “The photos allow us to explore (and explode) stereotypes about the gay community, who we are and how we live” (cited in Ingram 1994). Through the display of domestic scenes Gianni and Robbins conclude that “the majority of gay people live among their heterosexual neighbors. Some of us react against normative symbols of domesticity, others of us embrace them” (reproduced in Gianni and Robbins 1997: 219). The quotidian “de-eroticization of queerness” and “banality” of domesticity was celebrated in the reviews of the project (Butler 1994: 83–84); similar to the ways in which these issues are celebrated in the empirical chapters of this thesis. In *Architecture of the Everyday* architectural historian Steven Harris observes: “By documenting the private, ordinary realm of the everyday lives of purportedly extra-ordinary people – homosexuals – the project offers a view of marginalized domesticity and demonstrates the often banal character of the unauthorized” (Harris 1997: 4). In their discussion of the project Castiglia and Reed, however, note that eclectic interior decorating and high-design *can* be found in the photographs which draw on a history of gay domesticity as unique and, they suggest, distinct and separate from normative domesticity. Not surprisingly these authors critique the project and the celebration of “invisibility of queerness in the built environment... as evidence of the triumph of assimilation” (Castiglia and Reed 2012: 94). While Castiglia and Reed believe we need to avoid invisibility at all cost in an effort to remain exceptional sexualities, I think queer politics and LGBTQ identity is much more varied than that and in some of the interviews with Londoners notions of invisibility certainly work to construct queer domesticity.

In drawing this section to a close I turn again to Ross, who I quoted at the start. I share his opinion that sees the critique of domesticity as intriguing, but ultimately limiting – indeed this explains why I dwelled on potential critiques in order to situate my argument in the long transition of queer politics. Ross explains:

The queer ethos has its own confinements, its own essentialism: the implication is that anyone who goes in for marriage is betraying the bohemian essence of gayness [that which might, for example, embrace shame whole-heartedly]. Both sides of the debate tend to reduce the dizzying variety of [LGBTQ] lives to an ideal condition: either you’re prowling the bars or you’re gardening in the Berkshires. It is possible to do both, or, perhaps, to transition gently from one to the other as time goes by (Ross 2012: 50).

Following Ross, it is my hope that this thesis offers a new approach to queer theory by focusing on the often overlooked domestic realm whilst situating itself within a middle ground that on the one hand does not forget the history of the queer past or a collective gay culture and on the other that does not chastise those who want to fit in. I reiterate that those who reject sexuality in the homemaking process are not assimilationists or abandoners of a queer studies project of challenging heteronormativity, rather they contribute to this in more complex ways, urging change in a more subdued form but which can be just as political. This point was brought up in two interviews with older gay Londoners who deserve quoting in this introduction. Like my aspirational goal to see queer ‘queer-ied’, Eric notes he and his partner prefer to campaign for social equality in an alternative way, through living their everyday lives:

I believe spreading tolerance in the sense that, I’d rather people take us as we are for what we are... as opposed to forcing the issue... I’ve never been in the situation where I want that confrontation. I appreciate the good these upfront campaigners have done for the cause, and how brave some of them have been, by waving the flag *etc.* But that would have never been my style of doing it. *I feel tolerance and acceptability can be spread in another way, which is slightly more subtle, but just as important* (interview 4 February 2011).

And finally Basil notes: “we are really advocates of, between inverted commas, ‘normalising’ the whole thing because it’s part of everyday life” (interview 30 March 2011).

Introducing the subsequent chapters

Following this introductory chapter the thesis consists of two more ‘front end’ chapters (chapters one and two), three empirical chapters (chapters three, four and five) and finally a conclusion. In the first chapter I discuss the project’s methodologies, which have primarily consisted of an interview-based, oral history approach, where 58 interviews were conducted during the first half of 2011. I outline in detail the interviewing process, from recruitment to analysing the transcripts. I also outline the participant sample and acknowledge limits of the research. I argue that my own subjective situated-ness is important to foreground and indeed has affected and inspired the argument I put forward. In addition, I touch on secondary methodologies which consisted of solicited diaries and participant directed or submitted photographs.

Chapter two takes the form of an extended literature review but also an overview of some existing queer architectural projects. I build on the sources cited in

this introduction and several others from across multiple disciplines to position the research in existing work. I consider feminist and queer literature that has taken a poststructuralist approach of challenging facts and existing paradigms. This chapter will allow me to show the contribution that this thesis will hopefully make to queer architectural history – specifically a domestic approach to queer politics, which takes a distinct focus in contrast to much existing work in geographies of sexualities, and also a critique of the existing architectural texts and projects wherein sexuality is the topic of focus.

Both the third and fourth chapters focus on specific age cohorts. Chapter three highlights the generational issues affecting younger participants' experiences of home. I draw on coming-out experiences to look at both the family home and the home set up in adulthood. I argue that for younger people today understandings of home exist in both the parental/familial home and the home of one's own. Chapter four relies heavily from the transcripts with older research participants to show how this group both support and deepen my argument. In light of the fact that older LGBTQ Londoners lived through a time when the socio-political climate was much different and homosexuality was illegal, I highlight the main policy changes that have shaped these participants' experiences of home. Understanding the evolution of equality in both London and Britain is an important lens through which older experiences of home need to be understood. In this chapter I also show the divergent ways in which queering is done, ranging from homoerotic decorating to homes that have no outward reflection of LGBTQ identity in the homemaking process.

The fifth and final empirical chapter focuses on an additional phase of interviewing, wherein ten interviews were conducted with gay and lesbian tradespeople that work in the homes of LGBTQ Londoners – the gay plumber being one example. I use the interviews from tradespeople as an alternative way into the subject of queering domesticity. These tradespeople offer valuable insight into LGBTQ domesticity, but equally I recognise the uniformity and specificity of their viewpoint. These interviews show the obvious ways that LGBTQ identity plays out at home for a specific group of Londoners. Running in parallel to the main argument, I also use the chapter to provide insight into what is arguably an under-researched urban domestic labour phenomenon, which allows me to add to existing work on gender, work and home (*cf.* Anderson 2000; Cox 2006; Cox 2012b; Gregson and Lowe 1994; Treas and Drobic 2010).

The final chapter offers a conclusion by looking back at the thesis as a whole and pointing to future areas of research. In the chapter I expand on the autobiographical turn in feminist and queer theory, discussed in depth in chapter two, along with a look at my own queer home I offer a reflexive first-person narrative of a series of events I participated in during the final year of the Ph.D. I contend dissemination is an important step in the political activism apparent in a domestically-oriented project which looks at the multiple ways contemporary LGBTQ people are queering heteronormativity at home in London.

Chapter 1

Methodological Considerations

Introduction

My own experiences using interviewing as a main approach to uncover architectural history has been an exciting challenge and one that has, on many occasions, necessitated reflexivity. Like the introductory chapter as well as the literature review that follows this chapter, my methodological discussion uses the autobiographical voice to foreground my own subject position. Many spatialised studies focusing on LGBTQ identity have implicitly highlighted the subject position of the researcher, while others have done this more explicitly (see for example, Brown 2007b: chapter three; Andersson 2008: 38). One of the earliest scholars to argue for an approach where one's position is foregrounded in the research is sociologist Jeffrey Reimer. In his influential essay, "Varieties of Opportunistic Research" (1977), Reimer calls for the researcher to use his or her own insider knowledge into the subject of enquiry: "Sociologists should search their own biographies and keep a keen 'sociological eye' focused on the happenings around them. Likewise, students should be encouraged to apply sociology to areas with which they are already familiar" (Reimer 1977: 473). As I go on to show, queer theorists and oral historians have taken this up in recent decades where using insider knowledge to research LGBTQ participants has the possibility of foregrounding a host of exciting issues.

Looking at the quotidian spaces of home has inevitably shaped the research methods I used. Unlike scholars who research gay villages, cruising grounds or other peripheral and non-domestic spaces used by sexual minorities, it was not appropriate to use certain methodologies, such as participant observation or short on-the-street type surveys or questionnaires.⁷ Further, by focusing on the contemporary domestic spaces belonging to ordinary and non-celebrated Londoners as opposed to more famous instances of queer domesticity, archival research was also not an option as the case studies were heretofore never researched.⁸

Instead I rely largely on an oral history approach which gives voice to marginalised or invisible subjects (Blunt and Dowling 2006: 35). For a project that seeks to highlight how homemaking processes can queer heteronormativity, interviewing and engaging in dialogue with sexual minorities in London is a fitting

⁷ Andersson (2008: chapter 2) offers a critical discussion about using participant observation in public sex environments and Johnston (2003) speaks to the advantages and disadvantages of using questionnaires in the context of gay pride parades.

⁸ Frank Mort, among others, has used archival research in many projects to uncover London's inner-city zones where sexual identity plays out (Mort 1987; 1995; 1996; 1998; 2010).

approach. Gorman-Murray illustrates the value interviewing has for LGBTQ people: “gay/lesbian life-telling has been a crucial part of gay/lesbian “subcultural life for some time” because oral history can “destabilise the master-narrative of sexuality which inscribes silence as naturalised heterosexuality” ” (Gorman-Murray 2006a: 26, quoting Maddison 2002: 153).

The main research methodology for this project consisted of 50 semi-structured interviews with a total of 58 people – those that “unfold in a conversational manner offering participants the chance to explore issues they feel are important” (Longhurst 2003: 117). First I conducted 40 interviews with home owners (both couples and singles). I then completed ten interviews with LGBTQ tradespeople that work in London homes. Although interviewing constituted the primary methodology I wanted to employ a mixed-method approach to be able to explore LGBTQ identity at home from additional angles. Other approaches include analysing participant writing diaries as well as interior photographs, and in many cases further email communication took place.

The primary research methodology

The first phase of the research, the most in depth and longest, consisted of interviews with both LGBTQ singles and couples. The interview schedule touched on many broad themes: the location of home; interior design and home maintenance; household objects; domestic chores; domestic pleasure; parenting; neighbourhood; and meanings of home.⁹ There were several reasons for beginning with this broad approach: it sketched a detailed picture of the home and home life; it allowed me to work up to some of the questions that necessitated more thought (like “what does home mean to you?”); and it established a conversation which led onto tangential and equally fruitful topics (see appendix B for a copy of the interview schedule).

Recruiting interview participants was challenging and leads to certain limitations that I discuss below. Initially I put a poster up at a LGBTQ friendly café and bar in London’s West End which I had frequented, First Out (now closed). I then was able to put an advertisement on Gay’s the Word’s social media site – a bookshop which I regularly visited as a customer and which hosted a monthly book club that I belonged to. Figure 1.1, a screenshot, shows that initial recruitment.

⁹ I need to acknowledge and thank Gorman-Murray who kindly shared the interview schedule he used for his dissertation, which was incredibly helpful in shaping my questions.

Figure 1.1 – A snapshot showing recruitment through Facebook. 6 December 2010.

In this initial phase seven interviewees were recruited. Other methods of recruitment included: advertising on other Facebook webpages (for example the group ‘LGBT London’); advertising at a local agency where I volunteer, The London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard; and finally I utilised snowballing, by far the most successful method – which is “using one contact to help you recruit another contact, who in turn can put you in touch with someone else” (Valentine 1997: 116). Interviews lasted between 37 minutes and two hours, 21 minutes, with an average of 55 minutes. This phase of the research lasted the first six months of 2011.

Having no dedicated space within the department or university, finding a location to conduct these interviews was also a challenge. I was cognisant of the body of work that argues place is a very important factor in the interview process (Denzin 1970; Johnston 2003: 124–125; Longhurst 1996; McDowell 1998; Morrison 2010; Valentine 1997). I wanted to make sure my participants were comfortable, felt free to communicate, and did not have to travel far. After initially meeting in public spaces at the British Library and in a temporarily vacant office in The Bartlett School of Architecture, which were not ideal for various reasons including participant comfort and on-going distractions, I rethought the issue of location. As a result of meeting with Londoners who were referred by a friend, I became more confident about interviewing in participants’ homes (my approach in email communication was to say that I was willing to conduct the interview in the home or in a more public location, whichever is easiest and preferred). Interviewing in the home was clearly more relaxing and comforting for all involved (Bennett 2002; Dunn 2005). Not only was it easier to hear the audio recorder (and thus make transcription easier), with little to no background noise we were able to “draw on memories and meanings embedded in material objects and domestic spaces and use them to aid discussion” (Morrison 2010: 113) – which allowed objects to be used as “in-built ‘spatial prompt[s]’ ... thereby encouraging a closer connection to taken-for granted daily

homemaking practices” (Gorman-Murray 2006a: 45). On many occasions domestic objects like photographs or small artworks were picked up and handled as the conversation unfolded.

In the interviews with home owners I met with 33 singles and seven couples; 47 people in 40 interviews. Even though I was able to interview a substantial number of LGBTQ Londoners, there are a few limitations that result from the recruitment process which suggest the research is specific rather than general. First, advertising in a bookshop environment assumes a certain level of literacy and interest in books. And by posting an advertisement on a social networking site the survey sample is limited to those who have access to a computer and internet. Second, recruiting from an organisation where I volunteer assumes certain assumptions as well: the ability to dedicate time and loss of waged earnings to volunteering. Third, advertising in a gay café/bar suggests that one has the desire, money, and cultural capital necessary to frequent the gay scene (a city space that many LGBTQ people contest).

In looking back it is clear that recruitment methodologies are shaped by subject position and ultimately influence findings. I did not recruit participants at radical political marches, by participating in cruising or through taking part in subversive club nights. Both initial recruitment approaches, outlined above, were a result of my own comfort and familiarity in venues that I had regularly patronised. In the argument I make, which showcases the varied ways Londoners are using the home as a political space to queer heteronormativity, I found particularly interesting the homes where the occupiers noted a desire to avoid relating their LGBTQ identity to homemaking processes and indeed felt their home looked just like any other – which as discussed in the introductory chapter, is a political act in and of itself. I recognise that there is a very good chance if I had taken part in, for example, London’s s/m (somasochism) scene – if I put up a recruitment poster at clubs such as Vauxhall’s The Hoist – the proportion of participants that held this view might have altered. There is a chance that if I interviewed patrons recruited from one of these methods I could have found more radical queer homemaking which would have offered further diversity in the case studies. Furthermore, with a reliance on word of mouth, which was necessary due to the difficulty in finding participants, I ended up interviewing people from not only similar socio-economic backgrounds but who also shared similar values of home. Again, my recruitment and findings are both indicative of my subjectivity.

In terms of recruitment, I found it particularly difficult to interview two minority groups which would have helped offer a wider view of the ways in which LGBTQ Londoners are queering home. I interviewed (only) four trans people – which admittedly could have been better represented given London’s trans population – and no people from British racial minorities (I did however, interview four people from Hispanic backgrounds). The latter point in particular is something that I would hope to revisit in future research. In order to see how identity plays out at home for this minority I now realise I would need to make more conscious efforts to target specific groups, perhaps, for instance, by approaching groups like Imaan London (a LGBTQ Muslim support group) and the Black Pride Agency. There is certainly room for future work to address some of these points, which could be conducted by researchers who hold subject positions within some of the aforementioned under-represented communities.

While my subject specific methods of recruitment most likely exclude people – who do not have the wish or capital to frequent a gay café in central London or a LGBTQ bookshop or do not have friends that do, thus limiting the chances of referral – the class data I gathered points to a varied mix of backgrounds. According to their own declaration, respondents were raised in working class, middle-class or upper-middle-class professional backgrounds. The age range is from 22 to 78, with an average age of 49. Representative of London as a large metropolis attracting migrants from across the globe, respondents noted national identities with a total of sixteen countries (appendix D shows the more detailed quantitative information that was asked at the beginning of each interview, including demographics, identity characteristics and housing arrangements).¹⁰

The other primary interviewing component, as noted above, was to meet with ten tradespeople that work in the homes of LGBTQ Londoners. My motivation for drawing from these businesses, which can be found in a few big ‘Western’ cities like New York and London, is that these people have a privileged status that no researcher could have: they work within the domestic sphere observing everyday life as it happens. In some of the homes that I entered it was clear that I was taking part in a particular homemaking “material performance” (Dowling 2008: 541). Some of the respondents had prepared for my visit by clearing away everyday household objects, such as children’s toys, ensuring an immaculate appearance, placing biscuits

¹⁰ The complete list is: Australia; Belgium; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Colombia; England; France; Germany; Hungary; New Zealand; Scotland; South Africa; Spain; Switzerland; Netherlands; USA; and Wales.

on a tray, and making sure there would be no distractions. Out of the minority of research participants that invited me into their home, only one gave me a tour of his home – which would have been my brief opportunity to come into contact with physical and spatial aspects of home not brought up or photographed on the participant's terms; rather, the formality of the front room, or the kitchen table was the popular place where the interview was conducted. The performance I was taking part in speaks to sociologist Erving Goffman's thesis in "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life" (1990 [1959]) where he argues that identity can be divided into a back stage/front stage dichotomy. The former is "where the performance of a routine is prepared, and [the] front region, [is] where the performance is presented" (Goffman 1990 [1959]: 231). Geographer Nicky Gregson draws on the architecture of the English home, including "walls, fences, and gates" and even thick hedges, to suggest this enactment of privacy is a challenge for the researcher: "Getting beyond being the visitor is one of the key transitions for ethnographic fieldwork in an English setting" (Gregson 2007: 6, 7). I argue that one of the best ways to research what Goffman terms the "back stage," or the private space, the place where home happens unmediated, is to turn to interviews with domestic tradespeople. My interview with Cory, a gay painter/decorator that advertises exclusively to LGBTQ clients, illuminates just how much of the backstage service people can see:

Brent: Have you seen any visible identifiers in the homes you visit that might signify a customer's LGBTQ identity? *E.g.* rainbow flags, pictures *etc.*

Cory: Yeah, pictures and things, statues. No, I've never seen any rainbow flags. It's normally pictures. And in the bedroom I've seen leather gear and stuff. I do wardrobes and things, so I'll have to get the leather gear out.

Brent: So you get quite personal with these objects?

Cory: Yeah, that's why people are so funny about who they have in their home. You could be doing someone's bedroom. It is personal. They'll clear it out but there's still stuff around (interview 27 July 2011).

By interviewing ten tradespeople I was able to get an impression of LGBTQ homemaking from additional sources, to some extent bypassing the desire to mediate a "front stage" response to the researcher (see appendix E for a copy of the questions asked to tradespersons).

Of course the "back stage" that these tradespeople are able to offer a glimpse of is one that needs further clarification. In the interviews with LGBTQ Londoners about their home, many made it clear that they would not use such a service. Thus

the homes tradespeople are invited into belong to a specific group of sexual minorities that would hire such a service: people that not only have a certain income level, that can afford to own their own home, and have renovations done, but also those who choose to take part in a close-knit community (see chapter five for my discussion on the unique community-building that takes place within this network of tradespeople).

Despite dozens of businesses advertised – including, to name a few, lesbian removals, gay plumbers, and transgender fire protection companies – finding willing participants was a challenge. I started by consulting the classified sections in the local lesbian and gay press, *Boyz*, *QX*, *g3* and *Diva*. Figure 1.2 is an example of a typical advertisement included in the back of the gay press.¹¹

Figure 1.2 – An advertisement soliciting lesbian and gay custom placed in the back of the lesbian magazine g3.

In addition to the gay press, I ‘cold-called’ over twenty companies from the Gaytoz, a UK-based online business directory for LGBTQ tradespeople (see GaytoZ Search and Find). In the end I was only able to reach my goal of ten interviews by relying on word of mouth; it was clear that very few businesses were able to afford (or willing) to take the time off to meet a researcher.

These interviews were held in various coffee shops around London and lasted sixteen to 32 minutes. They took place from June to August 2011. Although the objective was to discuss the domestic spaces frequented in employment, I did collect some quantitative data about the interviewee, including age and occupation, as well as class background and ethnicity (which were self-identified by the interviewees). In addition I also asked how one would describe his or her sexual orientation (and all

¹¹ To protect anonymity I have decided to include an advertisement from a company I did not conduct an interview with.

stated lesbian, gay or bisexual). My reason for this was to see if heterosexual tradespeople are making use of the LGBTQ market. With only ten interviews (with a total of eleven people, one was with a couple) this subset of the research represents a homogenous group of people: white men and women from mainly middle-class and a few working-class family upbringings. The age range was from 27 to 58 with an average of 41. Interviews were conducted with seven different trades: two cabinet makers; three cleaners, including one who marketed a nude service; one electrician; one handyman; one interior design director; one mover; and two painter/decorators (appendix F offers a chart outlining the quantitative information of the tradespeople). These interviews constitute a very specific group of people. However, I reiterate that this sample was a complement to the larger interviewing project. I draw from these transcripts largely in chapter five.

In human geography semi-structured interviews are one of the most commonly used qualitative methods (Longhurst 2003: 118). However, writing from within an architectural history department, I found myself in a minority of researchers who use interviewing as a main methodology. In light of this I was faced with a steep learning curve. Another challenge I faced related to ethics. In four specific interviews situations arose that I was not prepared for, which included being propositioned for sex and the disclosure of information about illegality. Drawing attention to the ethnographer's challenge, social anthropologist Michael Connors Jackman has written about his experiences conducting research in the Atlantic Canadian LGBTQ community. Jackman (2010: 123) explains that

The power relations that operate in shaping the field as a space within which the ethnographer must resist giving in to the urges of carnality and reject the sexual advances of informants is one of the central problems of doing ethnography in a narrowly defined field.

Newton (2000: 250–251) similarly discusses, from a lesbian perspective, the fact that in oral history both narrator and researcher have a pre-existing understanding of shared subjectivity, more so than other oral history collaborators. Additionally, in their edited collection queer oral historians Horacio N. Roque Ramírez and Nan Alamilla Boyd suggest this is a challenge but also a reward for the LGBTQ researcher:

explicit talk about queer sex invites a certain amount of sexual energy into the oral history exchange that, for some researchers and narrators, produces intimacy and trust... These methodologically useful feelings are risky and difficult to manoeuvre during the oral history exchange, but they are also difficult to discuss as a methodological practice. The specter of sexual impropriety makes sexual feelings (and the intimacies that accompany

them) a vital but virtually unspeakable aspect of queer oral history work (Roque Ramírez and Boyd 2012: 10–11).

That is, the collaboration between both parties can, for some, evolve into “a bond, friendship, or political commitment,” in other words “something transformative seems to occur as the new knowledge is produced” (Roque Ramírez and Boyd 2012: 2). Indeed, some of the participants in the study have kept in touch and friendships have developed.

In their study of Toronto women’s bathhouses, geographers Alison L. Bain and Catherine J. Nash similarly note (2006: 31, footnote 1) the difficulty in separating the relationship between insiders and outsiders when researchers are themselves active participants. By the very fact of my asking to speak with sexual minorities, it was assumed that I was an insider: that I am a gay man.¹² As an insider, in the sense of shared sexuality, and quite literally in some instances within the confines of one’s home, my own subjectivity and positionality both as a researcher and as a gay man were laid before me. With exposure to flirtatious advances and knowledge of private and sensitive participant information, ethical and responsible approaches to conducting research were important. Like Connors-Jackman above, my experiences of conducting fieldwork “in a narrowly defined field” reinforced reflexivity as a part of the research – something that I may not have had to take into consideration if I was interviewing a different cohort where common values and lifestyles were not shared. I return to the theme of reflexivity – what queer oral historian Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy (2006: 279) defines as a dialogue which is the result from “the conscious identification of the social position of the interviewer and the interviewee” – in greater depth in the next chapter where I look at the feminist and queer turn to the autobiographical, something that has also been taken up in other disciplines as well, including anthropology, human geography, and oral history.

As a result of using interviews with Londoners for both primary methodologies, the empirical research is geographically specific. In many interviews London-based experiences of home were raised, for instance those relating to renting

¹² Interestingly, only one interviewee, from the 41st interview conducted, asked me to clarify my sexuality. Electrician Randy asked what my sexual identity was at the beginning of our interview. Given that he did this before the interview started it is not unreasonable to assume that he wanted to know what my intentions were: was I an ‘outsider’ or someone that was part of the community he belonged to? My awareness of this builds on the work of Reimer, who I quoted at the beginning of this chapter. Although none of the other 57 people interviewed as part of this research project enquired about my sexuality, some people knew in advance through the recruitment process – *i.e.* one must self-identify as LGBTQ to volunteer at the organisation where I located a few research participants, and relying on word of mouth means that my identity could have been disclosed in advance.

and owning in the capital, and issues around crime and London's transportation network. In light of this specificity one might wonder: why London? I initially proposed researching more visible and/or peripheral clusters of identity and it was important to come to a metropolis with an established LGBTQ population that supported these spaces where the practicalities of recruitment would not work against me. As countless research has shown, cities can often have a high proportion of sexual minorities. In *Metropolitan Lovers* queer theorist Julie Abraham (2009) offers an in-depth study of the interconnected relationship between cities and homosexuals, each shaped by the other. Abraham draws from as far back as the nineteenth century to show the links between homosexuality and the modern metropolis. For instance, poet Walt Whitman, she observes, offers one of the earliest links: "I will make inseparable cities with their arms about each other's necks,/ By the love of comrades,/ By the manly love of comrades" (Whitman 1965: 117; cited in Abraham 2009: xv). I am aware that despite its large population of LGBTQ people London is not the only place such a study could have been conducted. In addition, I do not want to reproduce the notion that one must make a one-way migration to the city in order to be out or that London – which admittedly tends to dominate the literature on geographies of sexualities – is the only place conducive to LGBTQ life. But with such a limited time frame for recruitment, the fact remains that London offered the greatest chance to interview a diverse cross-section of people (and beyond this, London has long been a city I wanted to experience living in). There is certainly room for future work to look to other urban zones, including suburban, rural or even more localised neighbourhood spaces. Such research could offer a similar argument that sees the home as a powerful space in which to queer heteronormativity, however case studies would certainly be distinct. Coming to London to research LGBTQ identity, one of the most diverse and accepting cities in the world, certainly affects the comfort that participants found in their identities and their homemaking processes. Ultimately, it is feasible that this can explain the view some people held which expressed a desire to see their home just like a 'normal' home; certainly if one had lived in a non-urban or 'non-Western' home visible aspects of LGBTQ identity might be much more important in the homemaking process or equally this could underscore the importance of hiding this aspect of identity in the domestic sphere. In chapter five one of the participants reinforces the former when he suggests as an adult out gay male living in London his entire home becomes his safe space and he no longer needs to foreground his gay identity, whereas when he was younger and in

boarding school, he had to stake out his identity in his room through gay material culture. With both of the primary interviewing approaches introduced I continue my methodological discussion by turning now to highlight the other approaches used within this research project.

The secondary research methodologies

In an effort to maximise triangulation – where multiple methods are utilised to approach the project (Valentine 1997: 112) – along with interviewing, I relied on three additional approaches: participant-completed diaries; interior photographs (taken in some instances by the respondent and in other cases by myself); and further email and phone correspondence. While the latter is fairly self-explanatory, I want to discuss the first two. The participant diary was chosen as a methodology in order to accompany the in-depth interview; simply put, it allows for further contemplation to answer questions and themes that were touched upon in the initial meeting. In an interview not only does one mediate what one says, but he or she also can forget certain examples. Geographer Carey-Ann Morrison notes:

Unlike one-off methods, such as interviews and focus groups, which tend to provide momentary interactions in a specific time and space, solicited diaries have the potential to offer a more considered and nuanced insight into the complexities of everyday life (Morrison 2010: 84).

At the end of each interview I asked participants if they would be willing to complete a short diary at a later time of convenience. I provided a hard copy and a self-addressed envelope and interviewees were given the option to complete electronically and email back to me. All but one interviewee agreed at this stage to take a diary. However, out of the 47 diaries handed out only sixteen were returned to me, representing a 34% completion rate. This stands in contrast to Morrison's study – one devoted to heterosexual love and homemaking of young couples in Hamilton New Zealand – where she notes all thirteen diaries were returned. This "is perhaps," as Morrison suggests, "a reflection of the women's normative (able-bodied, middle class, educated, heterosexual, mostly working in full-time employment... [with] no children) socio-spatial positionalities" (Morrison 2010: 85, footnote 44). I suggest that the low return rate of my study relates to two main reasons. First, it emerged throughout the course of trying to schedule interviews that many participants are incredibly busy with work and social commitments and in light of this fact I did not push or follow up on the diaries. This choice also aligns with my labelling of this methodology as secondary. The second reason that the diary may have been less-well

received relates to the quantity of questions asked. While Morrison (2010: 328, appendix 8) asked respondents to write each day for seven days on a single subject, my approach was different and perhaps required more work. Each day for seven days I asked the writer to discuss one specific theme about their home thereby suggesting seven tasks rather than one (appendix G is a copy of the diary participants were given). If conducting the project again, I would make a more concerted effort to use diaries with caution: this would involve writing specific questions that elaborate on issues raised in each interview, rather than general questions for all; further I would make sure the responses do not require in-depth work on the part of the interviewee. Despite having a 34% completion rate, the qualitative information gathered in those that were returned has been helpful in elucidating a secondary viewpoint into the home and home life of a sample of LGBTQ Londoners. Like interviewing, there are certain factors that must be foregrounded when utilising participant diaries as a research method. I acknowledge geographer Paula Meth's (2003) assertion that diaries in qualitative research have certain built-in limitations, including assumptions that respondents can read and write, that they have the time and energy to devote to the task, and that they want to continue taking part in the research.

The other secondary methodology I would like to touch on is photographic representations of interior spaces. After returning to my workspace and transcribing the interview I then emailed each respondent with a request asking if they would allow photographs of the home to be used in the research. I wanted to use photographs for their ability to capture, in geographer Gillian Rose's terms, "the 'texture' of places," but in so doing, particularly at the researcher's request, I realise that these need to be understood in a certain context. Specifically, one that "acknowledge[s] that photos are indeed riddled with representation" (Rose 2008: 155). In other words, there are many choices that need to be made in the act of taking photographs that I wanted participants to make, specifically the five 'w's' and one 'h': what (what object/scene)?; where (which room/space/frame)?; when (what time of day/month/year)?; why (why that choice)?; who (who is involved in the decision process, or who enters the scene)?; and finally how (how is the scene photographed, with what technology)? In light of these important questions, I asked participants to take the photos themselves or to have an active role directing me to important objects in the home, sites of memories or ways that their home might queer heteronormativity. I was aware that what I find interesting as a researcher and outsider in the home may be completely different to what the interviewee would find

interesting. Moreover, looking at objects that queer domesticity, one often needs to understand the underlying meaning – certainly only a small proportion of these objects do this in expected ways, for example through displaying homoerotic artwork – which further reinforces the importance of participant-led photography.

Particularly in chapter four I look at material culture in the home.

In the empirical body of the work I use these participant images strategically and with caution. Representative of their ‘secondary methodology’ status, I allow them to support the interview data where applicable. For instance, if in the interview the topic of conversation is a participant’s dining area, I show that space within the text, but I do not go into great depth analysing the photographs. While there are many ways to interpret photographs, where my own way may be different to that of the participant’s, I would argue the interview transcripts more accurately represent the home occupier’s own words (although certainly words can be also misconstrued if one is not careful).

While some respondents decided to take the photographs themselves with a digital camera and others allowed me to return to the home on a second visit and directed me whilst I used my own camera, the majority (57%) turned down my request to use photographs of their home in the research. Like the participant diary, this secondary methodology was not forced upon the respondents. If they failed to get back to me or declined I made the deliberate choice of not following up with a further request. I chose to do this after the interview so that respondents did not feel as though I was cornering them into saying ‘yes’; email allows for more time in the decision process, which further allows a partner or flatmate to give consent too. In total I draw from photographs of seventeen homes in the thesis to support the main methodology.

Utilising both primary and secondary methodological approaches has meant engaging with a large amount of data has been a challenge. The interview material and the participant writing diaries have necessitated in-depth transcription and analysis. With 46 and a half hours of audio files in total, the only way I could engage with such a large amount of quantitative data was through transcription: the actual transcription process not only allows for further immersion into the data (a second time), but it also produces a document which can be visually scanned and consulted more easily than an original audio file. The act of transcribing long interviews is one full of choices and contradictions. A body of literature within the discipline of oral history has drawn attention to the fact that “the transcript turns aural objects into

visual ones, which inevitably implies changes and interpretation” (Portelli 2006: 33). Similarly, “there is a world of difference between the grammar rules we follow in spoken and written language, and trying to fashion the former into the latter will always be an individually subjective reflection of the transcriber’s thought processes” (Good 2006: 365). My own approach was one which sought to respect interviewees’ spoken word, which was balanced with editing to offer coherent readable text. The interviews were transcribed largely verbatim; however, the minutiae of spoken English, for example the “ums” and “ahs” as well as sentences that began and immediately trailed off, were largely cut; in addition I use the ellipsis in transcript excerpts to indicate the removal of spoken sentences.

The phase that followed the transcriptions was somewhat different than the approach taken by others that engage with interviews. Some researchers choose to use software analysis such as NVivo, which can be useful for coding large amounts of interview data. One of the limitations of using computer programmes to analyse data is that it can lead to complacency and reliance on the software’s capabilities, thereby “fiddling with small pools of... data and losing sight of the complexity of the... whole context” (Bennett and Shurmer-Smith 2002: 206; Peace and van Hoven 2005). Others choose to rely on a more traditional method of coding done by hand, in order “to interpret personal stories and memories in a more nuanced and sensitive way than computer coding would allow” (Blunt 2003b: 84; see also Morrison 2010: footnote 56). In light of the advantages and disadvantages of these approaches I chose a personalised adaptation. After engaging with the data during the transcription process (and reading through the personal diaries when they were returned) I began making a list of larger themes. These emergent themes, then, have become the topics of each chapter. I then returned to reread each transcript (in some cases several times) in the writing of the chapters in order to support the argument. In sum, rather than dedicate a phase for the coding and analysis I analysed the content as I was writing the chapters. I feel this approach worked best for this project and my research style as I was able to remain constantly immersed in the transcripts through the process of rereading them on several occasions.

Conclusion

In this concise but necessary chapter I have discussed the methodological considerations which have largely consisted of 50 interviews with 58 LGBTQ Londoners about home and identity. The discussion aimed to be up front with

potential limitations that have developed out of recruitment methods. Taking a reflexive stance, I sought to position my own subjectivity as researcher and author in this process where participants were found through commercial establishments and networks that I was familiar with. In hindsight it is clear that this is due to my own status as an outsider and new resident to London (I moved to the capital in 2009), but given the opportunity to start again I would certainly be better suited and more able to tap into wider LGBTQ networks. While it may directly influence the case studies the research draws upon, I contend that the larger argument would remain similar: there are most definitely endless ways LGBTQ identity plays out at home, but regardless of the ways in which this happens, the home is a crucial space of political contestation to heteronormativity.

Acknowledging that I looked frequently to human geography in this chapter, in the literature review, which directly follows, I draw from several different disciplines, including architectural studies, to contextualise the research project. Along with reviewing the literature and siting the thesis within existing architectural projects where LGBTQ identity is foregrounded, chapter two also continues the autobiographical approach introduced in the opening chapter which was extended throughout parts of this chapter. Particularly the feminist and queer work of acknowledging one's subject position and encouraging an autobiographical stance has influenced the project of queering heteronormativity at home in key ways.

Chapter 2

The Literature Review: Negotiating Queer Domesticity

Introduction

This chapter takes a dual focus: it traces a history of recent key texts going back to the 1970s and it considers architectural projects that have, for the most part, foregrounded gay male identity (and to some part other non-heterosexual subjectivity). Drawing from a range of disciplines, including architectural history, feminist theory, human geography, lesbian and gay studies, and queer theory, this chapter provides a context for this research project. Put another way, as this chapter aims to make clear, this thesis is a result of, and response to (at least in part), the last three decades of work by scholars and architects that applied a social reformist attitude to their work. Specifically looking to architectural projects toward the end of this chapter relatedly allows me to show how the thesis and argument is a response to existing approaches to the built environment.

The chapter is organised into three main parts. In the first section I consider the past four decades right up to the contemporary era to show how the work of some architectural historians, poststructuralists, and feminist and queer theorists share a common thread: they all seek to challenge oppressive hegemonic ideologies; in addition, some rethink disciplinary methods and approaches to research and writing. The work of these academics paved the way for research on LGBTQ identity and space, and through outlining this trajectory, I aim to set the stage for a discussion of my own contribution to this body of work.

The second section of the chapter offers a critique of existing texts that have focused on peripheral spaces, which, as pointed out in the introductory chapter, forms a common approach of the research on sexuality and space. First I look to human geography to show two approaches from the 1990s to early-mid 2000s: the focus on gay villages and cruising grounds, spaces where non-heterosexual identity can play out. Next I look in more depth at the spaces analysed in two architectural texts, *Queer Space* (Betsky 1997), and *Behind Straight Curtains* (Bonnevier 2007). I show how these texts on the one hand contribute to increased visibility for non-heterosexual minorities, but on the other they run the risk of homogenising LGBTQ identity and ‘normalising’ a certain kind of subjectivity and domestic space that does not truly represent the diversity of this group of people. In other words, through stereotyping all LGBTQ people as consumerist, upwardly mobile, middle class, and body/sex-obsessed, the research risks passing over many sexual minorities.

The third and final part focuses on a group of architects and interior decorators who have worked to construct what I term a ‘gay domestic aesthetic’ – where certain architectural features and materials can be linked to gay occupied homes – in which gay male identity is almost always the focus. In this section I discuss several domestic projects including BOOM, a master-planned LGBTQ retirement village, currently in planning phase near Palm Springs, California, and a private residence in Los Angeles, California. I suggest these existing projects and others not discussed often construct a gay domestic aesthetic that needs to be understood in light of their exclusivity: the specific niche of sexual minorities that identify with the space must be kept in mind. In contrast, the interviews conducted in this research overwhelmingly show that many LGBTQ people subvert heteronormativity at home not by modifying the architectural environment but through making small-scale interventions and lifestyle choices. Thus the thesis aims to not only break down the notion that all sexual minorities’ homes can be read in terms of a gay domestic aesthetic, which currently exists in both architectural studies and in wider discourse, but more generally it hopes to build on the work of previous texts and projects by making room for a new domestic approach – one where multiple experiences of queering foreground the ways Londoners are challenging heteronormativity at home.

Deconstructing hegemony

[S]pace is for me never about property but always about our lives, ways we make home – shelter – rather than live in a world where there is a need for “battered women’s shelters” – I want to create a world in space where women can be safe – at home – live freely – to see such space would be a gesture of hope and possibility... (hooks *et al.* 1994: 27).

As this quote by black feminist and social activist bell hooks makes clear, our culture is built on unequal foundations; the scholarly work that seeks to tear down inequalities has been influential to this thesis. Feminist theory in particular has been influential in pushing disciplinary limits – of both observable fact and the methods used to uncover knowledge, *e.g.* through taking up the autobiographical voice – thereby working to make room for oppressed groups by deconstructing hegemonic structures of knowledge. As a consequence feminist theory is an important contextualising body of literature for the thesis, one which, as I go on to show, closely relates to lesbian and gay studies and the later discipline of queer theory, and a good place to begin a literature review.

Early feminists in architecture focused on a critique of the discipline of architecture as patriarchal where women have to negotiate a man-made environment (Rendell 2012: 87). Many historical texts show both the users and creators of space as gendered male. Examples include Vitruvius's (c80 BCE–c15) *The Ten Books on Architecture* (Vitruvius 1960), Leon Battista Alberti's (1404–1472) reworking in 1452, titled *On the Art of Building in Ten Books* (Alberti 1988), and Le Corbusier's (1887–1965) 1923 text *Toward an Architecture* (Le Corbusier 2008). Despite the work of feminists and others (including queer scholars) architectural pedagogy still has a patriarchal focus. For instance the story of Laugier's hut – where an ideal principle of architecture developed out of the primitive need for shelter constructed from nature – is covered in any introductory architectural course, yet it is a rather curious foundational myth. Betsky, whose work I return to throughout this chapter, observes we need to acknowledge this fable's inadequacies:

There is no evidence for this story, and it seems rather illogical when you think about the much more pressing needs of food, protection, and sex. It assumes that our society is a clean break from nature, performed by men. The absurdity of this idea is perhaps one of the reasons why architecture to this day has such a tenuous place in our society: it bases itself on adding an extra, superficial, and abstract element to the foundation myth of our society (Betsky 1995: 16).

Other aspects of architectural history have placed the male form as the measure of successful architecture and the *de facto* representation. English literary critic Marjorie Garber extends the argument that architecture is gendered male, in part by looking at architectural treatises. In reference to Alberti's famous text, Garber draws attention to the architect's separate spheres focus: Alberti believed "the Man moves; the woman remains at home. In essence she *is* the home" (Garber 2012: 126; Garber 2000). Examples of male domination include: the gendered body linked to classical column forms; Le Corbusier's the *Modulor*; and even *Graphic Standards*. Architectural writer Lance Hosey looks at the latter example when he shows that the anthropometric diagrams, in what is arguably the most reproduced architectural manual in the United States, overwhelmingly "reveal the human figure to be gender and race specific: male and white" (Hosey 2001: 101). Feminists writers have boldly taken on a long history of patriarchal domination.

Feminist architect Dolores Hayden offers an early study of female oppression looking at the domestic environment, a space in which gender inequalities, like heteronormativity, run deep. In *The Grand Domestic Revolution* (1981) Hayden traces a historiography of what she calls "material feminists", two

generations of women in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century who “dared to define a “grand domestic revolution” in women’s material conditions” (Hayden 1981: 3). This group of women sought to redefine domestic architecture by creating collective services that would provide socialised housework and childcare. Such inventions as the kitchen-less house, the day care centre, the communal kitchen and the community dining club were implemented by American women. Problems plagued such a revolutionary step in domestic architecture, though: along with social and religious norms that worked against them, “material feminists made the mistake of relinquishing men from their share of the responsibility for domestic life” – rather they felt that domestic problems were theirs to solve (Altus 1995: 58). In her chapter “Nurturing: Home, Mom, and Apple Pie” (Hayden 2012 [2002]), Hayden points out in the Soviet Union attempts to abolish the domestic space as a woman’s domain, in line with the industrialised thinking of German Marxist August Bebel (1840–1913), were ultimately rejected by “men’s ingrained resistance to women’s liberation” (Briganti and Mezei 2012: 74–75). Additionally, ultimately their efforts were ineffective at initiating social change with the governmental push for single family home ownership brought on by the First World War (Hayden 1981: 8).

Written in the late 1970s and published in 1980, Hayden’s essay “What Would a Non-Sexist City be Like?” offers a manual to free women from the constraints of the domestic environment. Hayden argues that the built environment at its most fundamental level is designed to restrict women physically, socially and economically (Hayden 1980: 171). The only way to reach equality in future is to attack “the conventional division between public and private space”. Hayden’s manifesto argues specifically that “women must transform the sexual division of domestic labor, the privatized economic basis of domestic work, and the spatial separation of homes and workplaces in the built environment if they are to be equal members of society” (Hayden 1980: 187). Hayden’s work challenges the gendered separate spheres ideology which was a focus of feminist writings throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s.

Taking a ‘herstory’ approach whereby female architects, patrons and users (including housewives), were given their rightful visibility, Hayden and other feminists shared an approach with lesbian and gay studies which equally took a recovery mode of analysis. In the 1970s, following on the heels of activism in the United States and other ‘Western’ countries, gay and lesbian studies sought to record the history of oppression by focusing on sexual minorities that identified outside of

the dominant heterosexual culture. The movement held the view that one's gay identity is a static and predestined factor; that is, one's gayness is a fixed trait, and hence gay and lesbian people will always be different to the majority of society. Although the movement charted new territory by bringing about greater visibility, its structuralist approach ended up reinforcing the naturalisation of a dominant heterosexuality against which lesbian and gay identity is defined.

Beginning in the early 1990s queer theory moved in new directions, beyond what theorist Ki Namaste calls the "stagnant hetero/homo opposition" (Namaste 1994: 230); its challenge to hegemony was clear from the outset. In her essay, "The Politics of Inside/Out", Namaste observes that "both mainstream sociological perspectives and gay studies neglect the social reproduction of heterosexuality, choosing instead to focus on gay and lesbian communities" (Namaste 1994: 228). Queer theory took as its focus a critique of the organising structure of discourses on sexuality. Writers working within the discipline observe that categories of personal identity, as well as notions of a dominant or 'normal' sexual identity, are culturally constructed categories; thus links can be drawn with the feminist tradition of challenging structuralist knowledge. In other words, both heterosexuality and homosexuality are a product of our time and not stable:

[S]ubjects are not autonomous creators of themselves or their social worlds. Rather, subjects are embedded in a complex network of social relations. These relations in turn determine which subjects can appear where, and in what capacity. The subject is not something prior to politics or social structures, but is precisely constituted in and through specific socio-political arrangements (Namaste 1994: 221).

Queer theorists show that the definition of heterosexuality depends on homosexuality; each can only be defined through what it is not: one *is* 'straight' because one *is not* gay. As theorist Diana Fuss puts it:

The philosophical opposition between "heterosexual" and "homosexual," like so many other conventional boundaries, has always been constructed on the foundations of another related opposition: the couple "inside" and "outside"... Heterosexuality, for example, typically defines itself in critical opposition to that which it is not: homosexuality" (Fuss 1991: 1).

In showing the interdependency of the two identity categories, it is difficult to suggest that one is more natural or that one existed before the other; thus the production of heterosexuality and homosexuality exists in an unstable binary. By situating itself not against heterosexuality, but rather as a challenge to normative understandings of sexual identity, queer theory "moves beyond this play between inside and out[(side)]" (Namaste 1994: 230). Through challenging the binary, queer

theory aims to resist essentialist categories of identity and at the same time affirm the experiences of people who do not fit into rigid identity labels (Marinucci 2010: 61).

Feminists and queer theorists question the organising structures of knowledge, and in so doing build on the earlier poststructuralist work of such philosophers as Butler, Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault.¹³ Butler, a feminist and queer theorist, offers a thesis on performativity which has been a key tool to argue the social construction of gender and sexuality, and thereby challenge the authenticity of one over the other. In her seminal book, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Butler 1990a), Butler argues that the categories of identity – sex, gender, and sexuality – are not essential to humans, but are culturally constructed through the performance and repetition of acts in time. The notion of performative acts connected to identity builds on the earlier work of Goffman from the late 1950s (Goffman 1990 [1959]) – introduced in the first chapter. Philosopher John Langshaw Austin coined the term “performativity” in his 1955 lecture and subsequent text *How to do Things with Words* (1962). Austin uses the example of the (heteronormative) wedding vow “I do” to show the “intense relationship between performance and performativity”: the words “receive legal force through the witnesses, the institutions, the spaces and the rituals that surround it” (Bonnevier 2012: 713). The acts that are related to categories of identity are, Butler suggests, “performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means” (Butler 1990a: 185). These acts are not voluntary, but systems of power decide which acts one must perform and which are considered ‘normal’, or ‘natural’. By showing that gender attributes and acts are performative, Butler argues that there is no pre-existing identity against which all acts can be measured, and in turn there is no ‘true’ or ‘normal’ gender. Interesting debates have arisen since the publication of Butler’s performativity thesis. One critique is that Butler’s work may be read as utopian, and that is one of the reasons why lesbian transgender activist and academic Julia Serano passionately disagrees with *Gender Trouble*’s reliance on performativity as a means to deconstruct gender. Serano notes that performativity theory is “a crass oversimplification... gender is a confusing and complicated mess” (Serano 2007). Serano takes issue with the way that

¹³ For a discussion on Foucauldian and Derridian influences in queer theory refer to Namaste’s article (1994).

performativity can work to delegitimise gender by suggesting it is a façade and fictitious. She observes,

This is a convenient strategy [for destabilising ideas of fixed gender roles], provided that you are not a trans woman who lacks the means to have her legal sex changed to female, and who thus runs the real risk of being locked up in an all-male jail cell (Serano 2007).

In most places as far as the law is concerned gender is fixed at birth (including three American states as of 2012). Serano argues that now, post-surgical transition, she is her most authentic “non-fictitious” self (Serano 2007). Serano’s view is an embodied example of philosopher Susan Bordo’s (1992) review of *Gender Trouble*, in which Bordo observes Butler “does not consider the possible different responses of various ‘readers’ (male/female, black/white, young/old, gay/straight, *etc.*) or the various anxieties that might complicate their readings”. In other words, “when we attempt to give [Butler’s] abstract text some ‘body’, we immediately run into difficulties” (Bordo 1992: 171).

Alongside queer theory, which developed out of lesbian and gay studies, gender studies pushed feminist theory in similar ways and in doing so found new routes of interrogating hegemonic structures. Architect and writer Jane Rendell shows how both new disciplines destabilise binary thinking: “gender and queer theory has developed a body of work which problematizes such seemingly stable terms as architecture, male and female, [as well as heterosexual and homosexual] and examines architecture and masculinity as mutually reinforcing ideologies” (Rendell 2012: 89). Baydar adds to the list of dualities that need to be destabilised by suggesting: “marginalized subjects point to alternative understandings of space based on fluid and porous boundaries between such dualities as materiality/representation, inside/outside and private/public” (Baydar 2012: 699). Both queer theory and feminist disciplines work “to show the limitations of socially constructed gender roles in space by pointing to alternative practices” in an attempt to destabilise established truths where “radical alterity” becomes foregrounded (Baydar 2012: 704). Marinucci’s text *Feminism is Queer* also draws links more generally between feminism and queer theory. She argues that the power of both disciplines for contributing to increased social justice lies in their critique of the “ ‘logic of domination’, which attempts to justify the systematic subordination of those who lack power by those who possess it” (Marinucci 2010; Warren 2000). Although there are clear links between the two disciplines certainly there are differences as well. One being that feminists working in architecture were motivated by inequities within

the profession and the patriarchal nature of the office environment (from the under-representation of women overall to the hierarchal/patriarchal structure of the office to the ‘glass ceiling’ – the notion that men had virtually unlimited earning potential whereas women faced difficulties progressing). Although heteronormativity certainly plays out in the office environment, as I showed with my own experience in the introductory chapter, this oppressive force has not driven sexual minorities writing in architecture in similar ways.

In architecture post-1980 feminism offers a critique of the gendering of the architectural discipline itself – rather than the recovery of an oppressed gender’s relation to architecture. To suggest gender relations are culturally, socially, and spatially constructed promises to push architectural theory to new heights (Rendell 2000: 102). Rendell notes the importance this shift has had for the discipline:

In a profession where masculinity is collapsed into the neutral figure of the ‘architect’, and sites of current architectural education and discourse: the office, the media, the institution and the profession, are also considered gender neutral, recognizing gender as a social construction in order to critique the heterosexual patriarchal bastion of architectural practice has been of key importance (Rendell 2012: 89).

In her account of the feminist trajectories in architecture Rendell observes that this shift had the effect of “producing a situation where the signifying structure was no longer taken for granted, and subjects, selves and spaces were understood to be performed and constructed rather than natural and self-evident” (Rendell 2012: 86). In particular new feminist and queer bodies of literature work to show the diminished agency of women and queer subjects in hetero-patriarchal discourses. One needs to look no further than “women’s limited access to certain parts of the city, which are deemed to be dangerous” as well as “non-heterosexuals’ discomfort in most public spaces” to see how sexual norms are produced through space (Baydar 2012: 701).

From the early 1990s, both queer and feminist theory offered new frameworks for studying architecture, one of the ways was through the spatial deconstruction of binary thinking. Architectural historian Beatriz Colomina was one of the earliest writers contributing to this sea change. In her landmark publication, *Sexuality and Space* (Colomina 1992a) – which developed out of a conference of the same name held at Princeton School of Architecture two years preceding – Colomina drew on interdisciplinary gender theory to critique architecture. Her essay, “The Split Wall: Domestic Voyeurism”, in the edited compilation looked beyond the construction of gender in architecture and its representations and “made the case that gender (and other forms of difference) is actively produced and reproduced by

architecture” (Penner 2005a: 89). Looking to both Adolf Loos and Le Corbusier she showed how gender analysis could bear on canonical architectural discourse (Penner 2005a: 89). For example, through her detailed focus on Loos, Colomina showed how with his Moller House, Loos breaks down the house as a sealed off object separate from the public world. His use of mirrors which appear to be window openings return the inhabitants gaze inward thus convoluting the relationship between inside and outside. In addition, as one navigates the home one’s gaze is continually turned back on itself so that looking inside rather than outside is of prime importance; that is, the occupants and the architecture themselves are the view, not the landscape out of the house as is often the case (Colomina 1992b: 85, 86). By breaking down barriers this work expanded the feminist move to challenge the separate spheres ideology linked to gender.

The collection of essays shows that architecture, among other disciplines, can be critiqued from a feminist perspective; thus *Sexuality and Space* “claimed a centrality for feminism” (Penner 2005a: 89), and, moreover, opened architecture to interdisciplinary critiques. The influence of *Sexuality and Space* on architectural discourse has been profound, and it has been a key force behind other important texts which look at architecture, gender, and sexuality from feminist and queer perspectives (Rendell *et al.* 2000a: 6), such as: *Building Sex* (Betsky 1995); *The Sex of Architecture* (Agrest *et al.* 1996); *Architecture and Feminism* (Coleman *et al.* 1997); *Gender and Architecture* (Durning and Wrigley 2000); *Desiring Practices* (Ruedi *et al.* 1996) and *Sex and Buildings* (Williams 2013).

In her other work Colomina has continued the feminist focus of complicating architectural theory. In *Privacy and Publicity*, for example, she theorises architecture as a symbiosis of mediums that are shaped by both publicity and privacy which necessitate navigation back and forth between building and society (Colomina 1996). Suggesting that we need to look both within and on the outside of architecture to understand it builds on her earlier work in *Sexuality and Space*. To spatially understand binaries between interior and exterior is to focus on the site of the wall: “the tension between inside and outside resides in the walls that divide them” (Colomina 1992b: 94). A further quote from Colomina shows how looking closely at binary ideologies seeks to interrogate traditional thinking:

Traditionally, architecture is considered as an object, a bounded, unified entity established in opposition to a subject that is presumed to have an existence independent of it. Within modernity the object defines a multiplicity of boundaries between inside and outside. In as much as these

boundaries undermine each other, the object calls into question its own objecthood and therefore the unity of the classical subject presumed to be outside of it (Colomina 1996: 14).

Thus to support her argument and goal of destabilising binary thinking, Colomina looks to the modernist academic tradition of challenging humanist ways of deriving knowledge.

Along with Loos, another influential architect that has designed a space which can be read as a destabilisation of binary thinking is Frank Gehry. In *Building Sex* (1995) Betsky suggests Gehry's residence in Santa Monica (renovated 1977–1978) blurs the boundary between inside/outside: “you are never quite inside or outside, controlled by architecture or free from it, or ever certain where in the process of (re)construction you are at the moment” (Betsky 1995: 185). Using his own home as a tool to deconstruct architecture, Gehry's design works to create a space in which, Betsky argues, the occupants are liberated from convention. In the next section I return to Betsky's work when discussing another book authored by him, *Queer Space*, but his reading of Gehry's home offers a realisation of the binary interrogation which Colomina and others writing in the early-mid-1990s encouraged.

Along with the work of Colomina, two other important texts came out of Princeton University's school of architecture, and each highlight the ways in which oppressed groups negotiate the built environment. Architect Joel Sanders's edited compilation of essays, *Stud* (1996), and architect Henry Urbach's essay, published in *Desiring Practices* (1996a), “Closet, Clothes, disclosure”, both focus on homosexuality and space (Urbach's essay was also published in *Assemblage* the same year (1996b)). The former was the first to deal with issues of masculinity in architecture; more specifically, it looks at how gender and ‘appropriate’ sexualities are built into architecture (Sanders 1996). In looking at masculinity Sanders's text exclusively looks at the male sex. The heterosexual matrix which sees maleness as exclusively linked to masculinity and femaleness tied to femininity would not be challenged until queer theorist Judith Halberstam's text *Female Masculinity* (1998b) (Bonnevier 2007: 36, 394; see Rich 1993 [1980] and Butler 1990a for their respective work on the heterosexual matrix). One of the essays in Sanders's collection, queer theorist Lee Edelman's “Men's Room”, for instance, points out how gender appropriateness is designed into the male public bathroom where some businesses have gone so far as adding televisions above urinals to keep wandering eyes ‘straight’ ahead (Edelman 1996). In his text Urbach illustrates the spatiality of coming out by building on the work that looks at the metaphor of the closet in

relation to self-declaration of homosexuality. The closet, Urbach argues, is both a literal place to store abject objects, as well as a socially constructed space in which to hide homosexuality in a heterosexual world (Urbach 1996a; 1996b; 2000). The site of the closet has been a key focus of queer academic enquiry outside of architectural studies, since Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) wherein she formulated an argument that saw the straight imaginary necessitate gay people to continuously negotiate the closet throughout life (discussed in the introductory chapter). Human geography specifically has expanded the spatiality of the closet. For instance, geographer Michael Brown (2000) theorises the closet as a site controlled by heteronormative and homophobic power/knowledge which exists in both the metaphorical understanding of the closet but also the literal geographical space. Sanders, Urbach and Betsky remain, though, the three frequently cited architectural writers to engage with the closet, and indeed they were the first to open up the discipline of architecture to spatialised readings of same-sex desire.

Queer theory has largely been left behind in architectural studies, yet feminist theory continues to flourish and inform the discipline. Feminist-minded research in architecture still has as its focus the desire to destabilise hegemonic understandings of architecture and in turn show how women and other oppressed people have right to stake claim to the built environment, but the method has shifted from focusing not on the completed object but on the process of design itself (Rendell 2012: 90). In other words, it has moved away from the addition of "women to the mono-gendered history of men" towards a reconfiguring of the "methods and structures of historiography" (Bonnievier 2007: 391). Architect Lori A. Brown's edited book, *Feminist Practices*, brings together a collection of women architectural designers and practitioners to explore the multiple, creative and cross-disciplinary modes of practice that are currently being undertaken. Responding to the surprisingly low number of females involved in architecture, Brown offers one of the few collections of feminist design methodologies in architecture through the exhibition of contemporary work; further, she shows that feminists continue to push the boundary of architecture through their work (Brown 2011: 368). The self-reflexivity of feminist work has been one of its strengths. By questioning the procedures and methods of not only architecture but also of the texts produced, this work has resisted falling into the structuralist camp of offering universal truths and taken-for-granted facts.

The work of London-based feminist architectural practice muf, a collection of mainly female architects and artists who formed a practice in 1994, show the unique ways feminists can challenge architectural methods. Rather than look to buildings as the final object and purpose of architecture, muf focuses on the generative power of the design process for form and object making. Muf stresses that rather than an act restricted to the professional architect, design should be a collective process that all users of the built environment engage in:

I think it is a bizarre consequence of the practice of the profession of architecture that the process of design has been marked out as a mysterious activity at the centre of layer upon layer of procedure. As if the process can't be understood by the uninitiated when it is something we all engage in every day of our lives (muf 2001: 31).

Notably, for muf, architecture *is* the design process. Rendell shows how valuable such a rethinking of architecture is when she writes “to position a building as a ‘methodology’ rather than as the end result of the method or process that makes it, is a radical proposition” (Rendell 2012: 92).

Feminist theorists like muf and others have gone on to shape architecture studies through their engagement with ‘critical theories’ – “forms of knowledge which differ from theories in the natural sciences because they are ‘reflective’ rather than ‘objectifying’ and take into account their own procedures and methods” (Rendell 2012: 91). Specifically the critical theories which acknowledge subjectivity through reflexivity and autobiography are an important contextualising framework for the domestic queer argument I put forward in this thesis. In their edited collection, *Feminism and Autobiography: Texts Theories, Methods*, feminists Tess Cosslett *et al.* (2000: 2) comment on the long-standing trend and interest to bring in autobiography to feminist writing, “beginning with the attempt to connect the ‘personal’ with the ‘political’, and the concomitant emphasis on women’s experience as a vital resource in the creation of women’s knowledge” (see also Skeggs 1995). Now many academics across disciplines insist that the subjective must be integral to the construction of knowledge (Cosslett *et al.* 2000: 2; Maynard and Purvis 1994; Reinharz 1992; Skeggs 1995). Feminists have shown that acknowledging one’s subjectivity through autobiography offers a critique to the oppressive humanist tradition of objectivity, the view that sees absolute truth in knowledge; or as Bonnevier puts it, “pretence [in] an objective, disembodied knowledge producer” (Bonnevier 2007: 382). Put another way:

knowledge is not objectively ‘there’, but is produced by subjects situated in particular social relations and historical discourses... [T]his emphasis

derives from a feminist questioning of universalist assumptions, and a realisation that knowledge is not ‘objective’, but has often been produced from a privileged white male-centred perspective that has pretended to universality and objectivity (Cosslett *et al.* 2000: 2).

As this quote suggests, in an effort to challenge traditional knowledge systems, it is important to acknowledge the embodied nature of one’s position.

Embodiment has been a key theme in feminist theory which is intimately related to the autobiographical stance. Feminist geographer Linda McDowell offers a definition of the concept:

[embodiment] captures the sense of fluidity, of becoming and of performance... The body is not taken for granted as a fixed entity but is instead seen as having a plasticity or malleability which means that it can take different forms and shapes at different times. (McDowell 1999: 39).

Embodiment takes us beyond the term ‘body’, and refers to the mutability and fluidity with which we move and enact our subjectivities across various spaces and times (see also Pilkey 2012: 160). In her inaugural lecture at Utrecht University (1990) poststructuralist, feminist and theorist Rosi Braidotti verbalised the importance of embodiment: “For feminist theory the only consistent way of making general theoretical points is to be aware that one is actually located somewhere specific” (reprinted in Braidotti 2011: 238). In other words, an embodied, situated researcher acknowledging the specificity of “I” is one that can lead to an epistemological shift. That is: “*Where* I am makes a difference to *who* I can be and *what* I can know” (Rendell 2007: 179; emphasis in original).

In her later work Braidotti (2006, 2011) developed an intricate theory of nomadic subjectivity in order to specifically challenge humanist thinking – which favours a unitary (hu)man subject as the creator of truth – in favour of a system of values based on “embedded and embodied positions” (Braidotti 2006: 31). While humanism believed that, to quote the ancient Greek philosopher Protagoras, “man is the measure of all things” (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy no date), Braidotti follows both Nietzsche, who urged liberation from humanism, and Foucault, who wrote at the end of his book *The Order of Things* (2002) that this is the era of the death of man, by calling for an anti-humanist approach which removes man as the privileged focus (Braidotti 2012).¹⁴ Although Braidotti offers a powerful argument for the inclusion of non-human subjects (and thereby moves into eco-feminism), she equally puts forward a highly developed case for the inclusion and rights of

¹⁴ See Han-Pile 2010 for an overview of Foucault’s call to move away from humanism, which was at the start of the sea change of poststructuralism.

minoritarian human subjectivity. Her concept of nomadic subjectivity builds on embodiment as a value system which encourages fractured identities across multiple temporal spaces, none more hierarchical than the other: “[t]he challenge is to destabilize dogmatic, hegemonic, exclusionary power at the very heart of the identity structures of the dominant subject through nomadic interventions” (Braidotti 2011: 9). She suggests that this will be done by supplanting “the sociological variables (gender, class, race and ethnicity, age, health)” by a theory that allows for multiple belongings and subjectivities that break down knowledge categories. Such examples of nomadism might include: “being homeless, a migrant, an exile, a refugee, a tourist... a mail-order bride... a citizen of a country that no longer exists...” (Braidotti 2011: 10–11). As this list suggests, a nomadic subject sits simultaneously across multiple identities, and if we can legitimise these identity positions then we can begin to break down existing hierarchies and categories of identity. Although Braidotti’s theory of nomadic subjectivity goes in different directions from this research project, it is through the link to embodiment that her work has implications for this thesis, which seeks to, in somewhat similar ways, open up systems of knowledge to create room for minoritarian subjects – which in my case might result from a domestic approach to queer politics.

While Braidotti is positioned outside of architecture, Rendell writes from within the discipline and has also recently expanded feminist research on situated knowledge. Specifically, through the concept of site-writing, she investigates the position of the art critic, “not only in relation to art objects, architectural spaces and theoretical ideas, but also through the site of writing itself” (Rendell 2010: 2). Rendell recognises that questioning the situated and specific position of the critic (in terms of what he or she *knows*, but also in terms of where he or she *is*) will lead not only to the spatial recognition of art criticism, but more importantly to a redefinition of the critic’s “terms of reference that relate the critic to the work positioned “under” critique” (Rendell 2007: 177). Like other feminists, Rendell makes a case for reflexivity, to not only challenge objective knowledge, but so that simple judgments and discrimination can be interrogated – in her case this refers to the perception that the critic holds an authoritative position over the piece under criticism and implicitly the human subject(s) that created it. The reflexivity evident in Rendell’s work is foregrounded in her discussion of the compound term ‘architecture-writing’, which not only encourages a methodological approach drawing from multiple disciplines, but which also “demands us to rethink the objects, subjects, sites, methods and

materials of architectural criticism” (Rendell 2005: 255). In other words, Rendell admits, this little hyphen questions a whole series of reference points about the practice of criticism and the tools the writer uses. Rendell’s work on art criticism shows the importance of interrogating and making explicit the researcher’s or writer’s position. Although site-writing is rooted in the specificity of site-specific art criticism, which is admittedly a key difference in research focus that must not be overlooked, it is through the concept of reflexivity that Rendell’s work is of particular value for this thesis.

Although feminism has led the way in the research which utilises new methodological approaches that foreground reflexivity, embodiment and the autobiographical voice, academics working in queer disciplines have also contributed to this body of literature, by arguing that critical reflexivity is an important component of queer research (see for example, Gorman-Murray *et al.* 2010). For instance in the fourth chapter of his dissertation, Brown makes an argument that queer academics need to be fully submerged in all areas of their research – which meant for him, taking part in east London’s gay scene as well as its radical politics – and to acknowledge the autobiographical nature of research (Brown 2007b; see also Andersson 2008, chapter 8, who similarly includes a discussion of researching cruising practices in Russell Square, London, and then finds himself taking part). Relatedly, Munt, whose book, *Queer Attachments*, I discussed in the introduction, begins by sharing experiences of her butch lesbian identity, which was an issue of shaming, both self-inflicted and caused by others (Munt 2008: 1). Finally in the introduction to his new book, *Queer Domesticities: Homosexuality and Home Life in Twentieth Century*, Cook includes a lengthy discussion of his life story to show the multiplicity of domestic arrangements but also, in his words, “to give some indication of where I am coming from and in part what has drawn me to histories and ideas of home and family and taken my investigation in particular directions” (Cook forthcoming: c.21).

The above texts show that LGBTQ scholars are certainly taking up the autobiographical stance in their queer writing and have for more than two decades. Fuss spotted this trend early on: “Recently, in the academy”, she noted in 1991, “some would say that it is “in” to be “out” ” (Fuss 1991: 4). Gorman-Murray highlights the benefits of using autobiography in spatial disciplines like human geography, which includes showcasing the resistance of everyday lived space:

Autobiography is... a personal record of lived spaces, of everyday social practices and spatial habits, of embodied geographies, eliciting personal connections with places(s), and revealing how those environments are firmly implicated in the ongoing constitution of self (2007b: 6).

That is, autobiographies celebrate the ways in which mundane private spaces are important spaces for minorities both personally and in terms of establishing a collective whose narratives might otherwise go unrecorded (Gorman-Murray 2007b: 14; see also Gorman-Murray *et al.* 2010; see also Plummer 2005).

One of the reasons that scholars have recently turned to autobiography is a personal and political affiliation with the content matter. On that note, Halberstam suggests her book on female masculinity is an “intellectual project [shaped] around issues of great personal importance”. She continues: “this book is an attempt to make my own female masculinity plausible, credible and real” (Halberstam 1998b: xii, 19). One of the reasons queer writers have written the autobiographical into their work in such political ways is to assert their identity against heteronormative academic disciplines. That is, as Halberstam suggests, writing autobiographically can allow for “intellectual sponsorship... in the absence of flesh and blood models” (Halberstam 1998a: 64, 62). In “Queer Theory in the First Person” queer theorist Adale Sholock agrees that her own motivation for writing the paper comes from “a desire for community and professional models – things that are difficult to locate in most academic spaces, which remain decidedly heteronormative” (Sholock 2007: 129). Yet, over the years certain disciplines have seen a substantial amount of autobiographical literature produced, and thus have worked to assert a strong queer presence in the face of heteronormativity. Sholock comments on what this might mean for the rights of sexual minorities:

Since the first person singular, most especially a homosexual or otherwise queer “I” has tended to operate as a professional risk and instant epistemological disqualification, the unprecedented level of queer visibility in the academy is commonly observed as advancement in the legitimacy or tolerance of sexual difference (Sholock 2007: 131).

However, Sholock concedes, it is important to understand the complexity of queer identity and to understand that others still remain excluded. In architecture, despite the presence of many queer scholars, I would argue the discipline remains overwhelmingly heteronormative both within and outside of academia – in the introduction I shared my experiences working in an architectural office, where it was clear heteronormativity was a foundation of the company which was incredibly oppressing.

With many queer scholars including the autobiographical in their writing the situated subject can become dangerously close to an essentialist view (Butler 2001, cited in Bonnevier 2007: 383). Sholock makes a convincing argument in her piece for the careful engagement with the issue of authority. She believes, and I would agree, it is problematic to overemphasise the autobiographical “where “speaking as” or from one’s marginalized position” comes at the authorial expense of those who do not inhabit a similar subjectivity (Sholock 2007: 139; see also Gorman-Murray *et al.* 2010: 105). In other words it is risky to assert that because the research is written by a LGBTQ person that it is more legitimate; to do so would mean “we risk confirming the heteronormative suspicion that the production of knowledge on homosexuality is only ever an intimate concern” (Sholock 2007: 145–146).

Engaging with one’s situated subjectivity allows for an acknowledgement that the position one is writing from might be a privileged vantage. In other words, it is important to acknowledge that research in the humanities is a product of interpretation by the researcher which is governed by economic, racial, gender and power relations (Sholock 2007: 140). As queer theorist John Champagne, in his book *The Ethics of Marginality: A new Approach to Gay Studies*, notes:

Those involved in the formation of the “emerging” discipline of gay and lesbian studies would do well to examine the ways in which their own intellectual production might inadvertently collude with the dominant structures of oppression that is in their interest to oppose (Champagne 1995: 31).

Taking these points on board, I do not suggest that my use of the queer “I” provides authority over others who might have conducted this project, who, for instance, might belong to the sexual majority. On the contrary, as discussed in depth in chapter one, I acknowledge the specificity of my positionality and findings. Put another way, if someone else conducted this project – with their own systems of power-knowledge, in the Foucauldian sense – the outcome certainly would have been distinct.

The autobiographical position allows me to acknowledge that my white, gay male and university-educated subjectivity – among others – most certainly plays a role in the production of this thesis. Despite my sex and race, which on the surface some might think excludes me from calling myself a feminist, and which clearly position me in advantageous ways over many others, I need not be disqualified from contributing to the discipline of feminist theory. Like Sedgwick contributing to queer theory, authenticity is outside of this discussion; rather through responsibly

acknowledging subject positions it is my hope that a contribution can be made. Similarly, I admit that in some ways I have physical attributes that fit with ‘desirable normative masculinity’ – in that I am not small or effeminate, for instance – one example of this is that I have only directly experienced homophobic verbal abuse, and never physical, from two people, as noted in the introduction, my older brother who, growing up, regularly used the derogatory epithet “fag”, and a stranger in conservative Montréal who directed a homophobic slur at my partner and me whilst we were holding hands walking down the street in the summer of 2011. Clearly I am lucky; so many other people are *not* like me.

The autobiographical position, which recognises embodiment and foregrounds reflexivity in the process of writing, has been a valuable critical theory put forward by feminist and queer literature. This move offers particular value to this thesis where I bring in my own subjectivity in both explicit and implicit ways, from returning to memories of negotiating heteronormativity (as in the introductory chapter), to recognising that the case studies are a result of my own recruitment methods (outlined in chapter one), to using the first-person voice throughout, and in that I appear at various moments in the interview excerpts. Along with offering contextualisation for bringing in my own subject position, this section has allowed me to situate the thesis’s aspiration to deconstruct hegemonic structures of knowledge in a longer discourse of feminist and queer theory. In moving to the next section I continue siting the research but in a different way: I show that much of the existing spatialised work on sexual minorities puts forward a similar agenda, one which risks normalising a certain kind of non-heterosexual experience and overlooking the diversity of LGBTQ identities.

“The trouble with normal[ising]” queer space

In his polemical and widely-cited text, *The Trouble with Normal* (1999) – initially discussed in the introductory chapter, and which the title of this section borrows from – Warner puts forward a radical argument that urges lesbian and gay culture to embrace sexual indignity and shame:

it is futile to deny the ordinary power of sexual shame... I want to inspire queers to be more articulate about the world they have already made with all its variations from the norm... with its ethical refusal of shame or implicitly shaming standards of dignity with its refusal of the tactful silences that preserve hetero privileged and with the full range of play and waste and public activity that goes into making a world (Warner 1999: 3, 192–193).

Since the 1990s there has been a separation of shameful sexual culture from queer identity, Warner suggests, and this represents a move toward ‘normal’ which “throws shame on those who stand farther down the ladder of respectability” (Warner 1999: 60). Warner believes that focusing on the goal of same-sex marriage, among other turns, is a mistake in the queer movement, as it results in ‘normalising’ queers. For Warner, ‘normal’ is clearly synonymous with discourses of respectability, in other words heterosexuality. But in putting forth such an argument that sees the rejection of respectability in favour of embracing shame, including engaging in public sex acts, where queers “bring to articulacy the publicness of sex publics, in all their furtive ephemerality”, in this section I argue that Warner, among others, ironically risks ‘normalising’ the queer experience itself (Warner 1999: 192). Put another way, to suggest that all queer people must, that they would want to, or even that they already do, embrace the politics of sexual shame, rejects the diversity which the definition of queer prides itself on – both in terms of lifestyles, but also in places where sexuality unfolds. In what follows I show the ways in which Warner and other scholars focus on specific tropes and places of queer identity.

From the mid-1990s an increasing number of academics in spatial disciplines such as geography and urban studies have looked at the ways in which sexual identity plays out, and through their work these scholars tend to focus on spaces which are peripheral to everyday domestic life, as discussed in the introduction to this thesis. One of the earliest British texts looking to LGBTQ sexualities in space was *Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexualities* (Bell and Valentine 1995). Influenced by queer theory, the collection of essays argue that the body, and in turn the space it inhabits, are governed by culturally imposed pressures, such as gender binaries and ‘appropriate’ displays of sexuality. The editors, geographers David Bell and Gill Valentine, observe that in order to counter the restricting pressures on bodies in space, queers have to work to overturn the heterosexualised nature of the city, and only then will they create a legitimate place to call their own (Bell and Valentine 1995: 16). While there are a small number of researchers in USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and a few other countries working on geographies of sexualities, geographers Johan Andersson, Jon Binnie, Gavin Brown, and historian Frank Mort are prominent researchers in this field in the UK (e.g.: Andersson 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011; Bell and Binnie 2000, 2004; Binnie 1995, 1997; Binnie and Skeggs 2004; Brown 2007a, 2007b, 2009; and Mort 1987, 1995, 1996, 1998, 2010). Combined, this body of work contributes to a queer theorised agenda of

breaking down heteronormativity by showing the way sexual minorities inhabit, for the most part, urban space. Much of this research – although not all of it, some exceptions discussed earlier – takes an approach which focuses on two specific spaces. A large proportion of research has focused, perhaps not surprisingly, on the gay village – a visible phenomenon now present in select major ‘Western’ metropolises such as London, Madrid, New York, San Francisco, Sydney and Toronto. Many scholars in this field of research fall into one of two camps. Some celebrate the history of the gay village by showing the ways it has worked to create a space of liberation where same-sex people could find each other (e.g. Mort 1998; Mort 2010). And others critique the gay village by suggesting it is a sanitised and watered-down queer place; through their critique a few put forward other ‘queerer’ spaces, for example Brown’s focus on east London (Brown 2007b).

The gay village model stems from the clustering of gay men in 1960s and 1970s in Greenwich Village, New York City (Collins 2004a: 1789). Originally a grass roots collective, the gay village has evolved into an urban space that is often linked to urban regeneration and gentrification. One of the earliest studies of the gay village was published three decades ago in 1983 by sociologist Manuel Castells. In *The City and the Grassroots* Castells argues that San Francisco’s gay district was established and maintained by gay people (Castells 1983: 139). Although Castells showed that the clustering of sexual identity could be a subject of academic research, his work has been widely criticised for problematically reinforcing patriarchy, which is evident in the following quote from his 1983 text:

lesbians, unlike gay men, tend not to concentrate in a given territory, but establish social and interpersonal networks. ... There is a major difference between men and women and their relationship to space. ... Women have rarely had [any] territorial aspirations: their world attaches more importance to relationships and their networks are ones of solidarity and affection. In this gay men behave first and foremost as men and lesbians as women (Castells 1983: 140).

In other words, the gay village, for Castells, was the result of male desire to dominate public space; feminist theory, as has been shown, has sought to counter the dominance of male public space that Castells describes. Despite some of its dated conclusions, Castells’s sociological study of identity was ground-breaking and paved the way for future research.

More recently, researchers have pushed the study of the gay village in new directions. For instance geographer Dereka Rushbrook shows how city policies are increasingly linking commercial gay clusters to categories of ethnic diversity in an

effort to attract tourists seeking the cosmopolitan experience. The result of the commodification of tourism and city policies, Rushbrook suggests, is the “blurring of boundaries... accompanied by a watering down of queerness” (Rushbrook 2003: 198). Along similar lines, Binnie and fellow geographer Beverly Skeggs (2004) have argued that the gay village has been marketed and packaged as a fixed city space to be consumed by heterosexuals. Although anyone is free to visit the gay village, certain non-heterosexuals are more drawn to the space and feel more welcome than others, such as young gay men with money to spend and bodies to impress; for human geographers Bell and Binnie, this is problematic. They observe that the gay village has played an influential role in conscripting certain sexual minorities, which dominant straight society is willing to accept – be it in the gay village or in society in general – to the exclusion of all other ‘inappropriate’ LGBTQ people that do not fit into this mould (Bell and Binnie 2004: 1807; Oswin 2008). Geographer Mark Casey has also looked at the ways in which heterosexuals are consuming Newcastle-upon-Tyne’s Pink Triangle, its local gay cluster. He suggests that both the popularity of the space amongst heterosexuals, as well as homophobia by gay men using gay commercial establishments has resulted in lesbian women finding themselves excluded from these spaces (Casey 2004). And more recently architectural historian Richard J. Williams (2011) argues that Manchester’s Canal Street sits in a longer lineage of urban regeneration which uses architecture to, on the one hand control sex, but on the other, foreground new acceptable definitions of sexuality.

While in the above texts the authors look closely at the complexity of LGBTQ identity in these urban spaces, some scholars passionately argue that ‘true’ queer identity and the gay village do not easily go together and their language can be antagonistic. Binnie is one such academic who, through his work, devalues the gay village by referring to it as “superficial” and “artificial”. More recently, Gavin Brown follows in his footsteps by suggesting this city space is a site where users are “passive” and “apolitical” (Brown 2007a; Andersson 2008: 17). A similar tone exists in his differentiation between gay and queer space. Brown argues that one cannot call a commercial space a queer space: “once it becomes incorporated and recuperated within capitalist markets, once it becomes a product to be consumed, it ceases to be very queer”. Thus, while “gay identities are inherently tied into the alienated social relations of consumer capitalism” (Brown 2007b: 70, 81), queer spaces, because they are anti-capitalist, one can infer, are less-alienating and therefore more authentic. Although the gay village may not be the most welcoming for all, I echo the opinion

of Andersson, who observes this specific “terminology is too blunt to adequately represent the complex relationship between sexual politics and commercial culture” (Andersson 2008: 17).

I suggest these studies and others not covered here have had three major advantages. They have been useful for illuminating the ways sexual identity plays out in urban space in relation to both the dominant heterosexual culture and fractures within LGBTQ culture. Secondly, they work to bring about a greater visibility of non-heterosexuals in the city. Finally, the work by this group of academics has had the effect of legitimising queer research within the academy, paving the way for future work, this thesis included, sited at the boundary of traditional research. In light of my domestic focus I suggest the literature looking to the gay village also has one limitation: specifically that it looks to peripheral spaces removed from the majority’s experience. Despite critiquing the gay village as ‘homonormative’ – a concept that I briefly explain in the next paragraph – few scholars look to alternative spaces where sexual identity plays out on a daily basis; though there are some important early examples of research that looks to ordinary spaces *e.g.* Valentine’s (1993) study which focused on home, work and public sites like restaurants and business and geographers Stewart Kirby’s and Iain Hay’s (1997) paper on homes, work and heteronormative everyday public space. In researching other geographies of sexualities there is potential to work towards breaking down understandings of non-heterosexual identity belonging to specific peripheral zones in the city. I contend that looking at the ways in which LGBTQ people occupy and queer domestic space aims to complement and extend existing bodies of research.

Over the past decade scholars have begun to question the ways in which a specific non-heterosexual subjectivity has become widely accepted at the expense of others in both the gay village and more generally; queer theorist Lisa Duggan coined this ‘homonormativity’ (Duggan 2002; Nast 2003; Oswin 2005; Puar 2006; Casey 2007). In other words, certain forms of homosexual culture have become normative within the larger discourse of heteronormativity, which relate to specific socio-economic and national geographies (Brown 2009: 1496). Although a poignant body of literature, I suggest the concept of homonormativity, like the literature that implicitly presents a ‘queer normativity’, can, when not used carefully, risk negating the experiences of some non-heterosexuals that *do* actually fit into ‘acceptable’ forms of sexual identity. Some of the interviews in this research might, by some standards, be termed homonormative in that they fit in with dominant forms of gayness, but

such an argument can be problematic: it risks negating these individuals' subjectivity and experiences in favour of other queer forms of identity (see chapter one, for my discussion of the limits of participants).

Along with the gay village, the focus on sex (both in public locations and more generally) has been another approach of spatialised research on sexual minorities over the past two decades. In "Sex in Public" Berlant and Warner, argue that queer culture can knock down the privilege of heterosexuality by celebrating public sex:

We want to promote as the radical aspirations of queer culture building: not just a safe zone for queer sex but the changed possibilities of identity, intelligibility, publics, culture, and sex that appear when the heterosexual couple is no longer the referent or the privileged example of sexual culture (Berlant and Warner 1998: 548).

These scholars argue "privatized sexual culture bestows on its sexual practices a tacit sense of rightness and normalcy", which only "queer indignity" through public sex acts can challenge (Berlant and Warner 1998: 554). Berlant and Warner draw on the history of queer public sex to legitimise it:

what brings us together is sexual culture, there are very few places in the world that have assembled much of a queer population without a base in sex commerce... Respectable gays like to think that they owe nothing to the sexual subculture they think of as sleazy. But their success, their way of living, their political rights, and their very identities would never have been possible but for the existence of the public sexual culture that they now despise (Berlant and Warner 1998: 563).

While "respectable gays" are in some way indebted to the sexual culture of earlier decades it is hard not to see the hostility in these words.

In *The Trouble with Normal*, the text I drew from at the start of this section, Warner expands on some of the arguments above in further detail. By showing that the original purpose of the gay and lesbian movement was the struggle for sexual freedom, he argues that since the 1960s sex has been a defining factor for gay people (Warner 1999: 24). And the close connection with sex and gay identity was reinforced when AIDS appeared in the early 1980s, which was originally thought to only affect the gay community because of sexual promiscuity and immoral sexual acts. Since the AIDS crisis, Warner argues, heteronormative policies of sexual shame have forced queer people to become "enthralled by respectability" (Warner 1999: 25) – Warner's use of queer is largely a political term reserved for gay men. Contemporary gay men, he suggests, often align themselves with the dominant

heterosexual culture that seeks to keep sex in the private realm, while stigmatising promiscuity as non-intimate and immoral.

The stigmatisation of immoral sex acts is not something specific to the United States, the place that Warner considers. At the peak of the AIDS epidemic, in the late 1980s, the conservative government in the UK, led under Margaret Thatcher (1925–2013), attacked promiscuity by pressing for more traditional family values and militated against homosexuality with Section 28, a law that prohibited the promotion of homosexuality as a “pretend family relationship” (Weeks 1990: 240). While I expand on this and other political policies that have shaped older LGBTQ Londoners’ domestic experiences in chapter four, I draw attention to this particular law here to show that Warner’s observations about the impact of AIDS stretch across international borders.

In *Dangerous Sexualities* Mort suggests that the moral and political control of promiscuity that surrounded the AIDS crisis “is the contemporary moment in a much longer history, the extraordinarily complex interweaving of medicine and morality with the surveillance and regulation of sex” (Mort 1987: 2). Andersson has also shown that after the AIDS crisis, architecture and interior design responded to the stigma society now attached to the gay community and the bars gay people inhabit in London: “in aesthetic terms”, he notes, “Soho’s gay bars are characterised by clean chromed surfaces, white walls and minimalist furniture”; they parallel the wider cultural paranoia with hygiene and cleanliness (Andersson 2009: 55).

The link between gay men (and to some extent other non-heterosexual) identity and sex more generally has been reiterated by many scholars. Many have deliberately centred their research on sex to push the heteronormatively conservative boundaries of the academy. Betsky’s thesis, from his book discussed at length below, that “the goal of queer space is orgasm”, is one such example (Betsky 1995: 17). Like Betsky, Binnie is another academic who has worked to conflate sexual desire with the LGBTQ experience. Binnie observes: “queer space is ephemeral, one constructed by desire in the first place”. Furthermore, Binnie explicitly argues that work on sexuality and space needs to be more assertive in order to challenge heterosexism, and sex is the catalyst to do this; it must be brought centre-stage. He proposes that discussing the “mess and goo” of bodies in space – as he does in his dissertation – will allow academics to resist the pressures of doing ‘respectable’ research (Binnie 1997: 160, 33, 41, 22). Munt’s “Orifices in Space: Making the Real Possible”, an article showing how public toilets are powerful sites of gender and

sexual contestation, is an excellent example of bringing forth the body in all its apparent humanity to resist heteronormativity in the academy. Munt's uninhibited approach celebrates, not only the "mess and goo" (Binnie 1997: 160), but quite literally the "piss and poo" of bodies in space (Munt 1998). Writing a decade later, Brown situates himself in the same school of thought as these scholars by arguing that,

like Binnie, I believe it is important that queer researchers bring sex centre stage in their work as part of a strategy of resisting the heteronormative pressures to constrain it and keep it out of the public gaze (Brown 2007b: 104).

One of the reasons that academics have focused on sites of sex is that its real-world relevance for activism is unmistakable. For instance, Warner, a scholar who I have shown passionately argues for embracing public sex, observes "the politics I advocate – a frank embrace of queer sex in all its apparent indignity, together with a frank challenge to the damaging hierarchies of respectability – can result in neither assimilation nor separatism if carried through consistently" (Warner 1999: 74). Warner believes that to buy into gay marriage and to reject sexual shame, and to ignore that "queer culture has long cultivated an alternative ethical culture that is almost never recognized by mainstream moralists", one is assimilated into the heteronormative mainstream (Warner 1999: viii). Warner argues that the lesbian and gay movement has conventionally "defined itself too narrowly", and therefore embracing gay shame and public sex will open up the movement to more people (Warner 1999: viii). While this is a powerful argument, and well-articulated in a way that only Warner could construct, I suggest it is itself ironically limiting and narrowing: my contention is not that LGBTQ people should not embrace shame or public sex, rather in making such an argument we must not chastise those who do not participate in these methods of activism and equally must not ignore the importance of domesticity as a site in which queer politics play out. I contend that queer theory must work to create legitimacy for the maximum amount of people, to broaden queer politics. Thus a domestic approach seeks to build on this work opening up the discipline to LGBTQ subjectivities which challenge heteronormativity in distinct ways.

Of course it is important to understand the period in which Warner was writing (the 1990s), where outrage in response to HIV/AIDS dominated gay politics. This is not to suggest that the epidemic is over, indeed there are alarming rates of infection, as highlighted earlier, but rather, problematically or not, queer politics has

shifted and anger and outrage seem to have fallen away. Despite this, two more recent texts that have followed Warner's argument and approach are Edelman's *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (2004) and the co-authored book *Intimacies* (2008), by literary and queer theorist Leo Bersani and psychotherapist Adam Phillips (although Phillips's contribution is one summative chapter). It is necessary to discuss these authors' contributions and their potential responses to this queer domestic thesis.

In his text Edelman argues the figure of the child is an omnipotent focus of politics (Edelman 2004: 3). Heteronormativity itself *is* "reproductive futurism", wherein social order, the legitimacy of heterosexual relations, and the very future of our species rests on perpetuating babies/children: so long as there is reproduction there is a future,

if however there is *no baby* and, in consequence, no future, then the blame must fall on the fatal lure of sterile, narcissistic enjoyments understood as inherently destructive of meaning and therefore as responsible for the undoing of social organization, collective reality, and, inevitably, life itself (Edelman 2004: 13, emphasis in original).

Following Bersani's controversial provocation, "Is the Rectum a Grave?", from an essay of the same title (Bersani 1987), Edelman argues queerness is a dead-end line outside of reproductive futurism. Simply put, non-heterosexuals are future-negating, but crucially this "death drive names what the queer... is called forth to figure" (Edelman 2004: 9). There is political potential here which needs to be grasped: queers, Edelman argues, "*should* and *must* redefine such notions as "civil order" through a rupturing of our foundational faith in the reproduction of futurity... fuck the social order and the Child in whose name we're collectively terrorized..." (Edelman 2004: 17, 29, emphasis in original).

Edelman's argument, like Warner's, is politically powerful (and controversial) and indeed gay men in particular were (and still are) often viewed by the mainstream as a dead end; anyone that has come out to a crying mother knows too well that her tears were likely a result of instant realisation that she may never have grandchildren. While calling for rejecting futurity has potential to destabilise the mainstream, the question remains, what if LGBTQ people desire children and a line to futurity – as many in my friend circle and I do? I echo Cook's point here that this argument is politically and theoretically convincing but Edelman's "rejection of futurity... [can be] cold comfort and culturally isolating" (Cook forthcoming: 22). Although Edelman centres his discussion on the death drive and rejection of futurity,

and does not explicitly discuss domesticity, I think it is safe to make an assumption that the home, particularly the family home, as the primary site of heteronormativity, must also be rejected. Domestic bliss it is easy to assume would also need to be rejected in order to avoid “the rigid sameness of identity” that heteronormativity beckons which death drive politics seeks to counter (Edelman 2004: 21). As I go on to show many people that this research draws from have mainstream-like desires for children, futurity and domestic bliss that a death drive thesis would call to reject. But, crucially, that does not mean these participants are supporting heteronormativity, or a “rigid sameness of identity”, rather they offer their own distinct and varied challenges through domestic materiality, homemaking and lifestyle choices (Edelman 2004: 21).

In Bersani’s and Philips’s text, which seeks to find a new notion of intimacy based on future potential rather than the restrictions of the past wherein intimacy was found in the monogamous body of one other person, the death drive is expanded upon as an affective queer politic. Specifically discussing the unsafe act of condom-less sex between men, Bersani, in one of his chapters, evocatively argues that barebacking among multiple partners – although admittedly dangerous – is a realisation of Edelman’s death drive, a powerful queer act (Bersani and Philips 2008: 45). This discussion allows Bersani to foreground in a very vivid and heteronormatively-shocking way that gay sex and intimacy can be anything but normal. Moreover if “queer intellectuals are curiously reticent about the sexuality they claim to celebrate”, as Bersani suggests, then this allows him to show that he does not fit into this cohort (Bersani and Phillips 2008: 31). In his earlier text, *Homos* (1995), Bersani stated the argument that gay people need to celebrate the sex which is an important part of queer sexuality – and for this reason he prefers the term queer to gay, because it “seem[s] to [offer], in a large part, an emphasis on the inextricability of the sexual and the political” (Bersani 1995: 72). Although there has been in recent decades clearly an increased presence of non-heterosexual identity, which AIDS in particular made visible, gay identity, Bersani observes, has been problematically defined by absence:

Never before in the history of minority groups struggling for recognition and equal treatment has there been an analogous attempt, on the part of any such group, to make itself unidentifiable even as it demands to be recognized... gays have been de-gayng themselves in the very process of making themselves visible (Bersani 1995: 31, 32).

The problem Bersani feels, is that by assimilating into the mainstream and making oneself 'normal', gay people support homophobia's erasure of gay identity (Bersani 1995: 5, 42). While this is valid point, in the research that follows it is not my intention to reinforce identities of sameness, to make LGBTQ subjectivity invisible; in contrast, rather, I seek to do the opposite while taking a domestic approach: I bring visibility and give agency to the small-scale ways in which people are queering heteronormativity, which shows the multiple and diverse ways identity can play out in space. And although I do not explicitly seek to foreground sex as Bersani and others might like me to, in some interviews it certainly was discussed and relates to homemaking processes, but, importantly, a culture of sex yoked to sexuality did not come up in many of the interviews, which is telling in itself.

It is clear that there is a fluidity between Warner, Edelman and Bersani and others who take up similar approaches; and these scholars might all, admittedly, suggest that I am domesticating gayness (or queerness) in a way that reinforces rather than subverts heteronormativity. But it is my hope that the specificities of the queer domestic home show that it is an important site in which queer politics play out; and as I argued in the introduction, this thesis seeks to move in a new direction that does not attack existing approaches to queer theory but rather opens up the discipline to a frequently overlooked spatial zone. The authors outlined above who look at the sexual citizen were crucial for creating a legitimate study within academia in the 1990s and 2000s. While cruising, the economy of sex, and barebacking, is important for *some* gay men, I argue these are activities and political acts not taken up by all gay men, lesbians, transgender people or other sexual minorities of various age groups – in this regard the specificities of barebacking are perhaps most clear. Not all of the participants in this thesis situate themselves in these queer politics. There is a possibility of some of these existing arguments and approaches to, I suggest, risk presenting a specific and normalised LGBTQ identity, politic and experience of space: thus there is an inherent trouble with normalising queer space. Architectural texts have also contributed to, on the whole, presenting a specific rather than wide representation of the spaces sexual minorities inhabit.

In 1997 the first monograph on queer space was published, Betsky's *Queer Space: Architecture and Same-Sex Desire*; even sixteen years later in 2013 it remains one of the very few architectural texts foregrounding sexual minority identity.¹⁵ In

¹⁵ For this reason Betsky was invited to deliver a keynote address at a conference I organised at The Bartlett School of Architecture in December 2012 titled *Sexuality at Home: An Interdisciplinary*

his book Betsky offers a mapping of the history of, for the most part male, same-sex desire and the negotiation of the built environment. Through his historical approach, Betsky looks at (in)famous and iconic spaces, such as the homosocial male baths of ancient Greece, the New York City nightclub Studio 54, and the buildings designed for patrons who were gay or by male architects who slept with men: spaces that are, Betsky suggests, liberating and that “might help us avoid some of the imprisoning characteristics of the modern city” (Betsky 1997: 5).

As I go on to show, Betsky approaches queer and sex more closely than many queer theorists would be happy with; he uses ‘queer’, similar to Warner, although less explicitly as a political voice but more so as a synonym for gay. He observes queers (gay men) forged their way against heteronormativity in certain spaces: they “made [the city] their own, they opened it up on the margins, they performed it” (Betsky 1997: 13). Thus, the experiential is key to his argument. He continues by suggesting queer space is an alternative space “a third place for the third sex, that functions as a counterarchitecture [*sic*], appropriating, subverting, mirroring, and choreographing the orders of everyday life in new and liberating ways” (Betsky 1997: 26).¹⁶ Despite its important role for instigating change, queer space, Betsky suggests,

is a useless, amoral, and sensual space that lives only in and for experience. It is a space of spectacle, consumption, dance, and obscenity. It is a misuse or deformation of a place, an appropriation of the buildings and codes of the city for perverse purposes (Betsky 1997: 5).

Paradoxically, even though queer space has the potential to subvert heteronormative space through queer occupation, Betsky puts forward an argument that suggests the outcome is “useless”, “artificial space... that dissolves the material world” into an ephemeral space where the “perverse” pleasures of the body are the sole purpose of being (Betsky 1997: 18). Notable to the above quote is his argument that through desire and sensuality in queer space shame is embraced wholeheartedly. Thus one can see similarities between Betsky and Warner, through their mutual insistence on sex as a defining feature of minority identity, as well as other scholars discussed at length in the opening chapter that contribute to a politic of gay shame.

Research Workshop Exploring the Relationship Between Domesticity and Sexuality; in the concluding chapter I discuss the outcome of his lecture in which he revisited *Queer Space* on the fifteenth anniversary of its publication (Betsky 2012b).

¹⁶ To suggest that queer men and women are a third sex is to regress back to the late-nineteenth century, where homosexual advocates John Addington Symonds (1840–1893), Havelock Ellis (1859–1939) and Edward Carpenter (1844–1929) put forward “the notion of an ‘intermediate’ or ‘third sex’, [which] offered the most productive way out of the trap of Victorian condemnation” (Weeks 1990: 49).

For Betsky, queer space is less about the physical architecture and more about the gestures and experiences that come out of using these spaces: “gesture exaggerates the body, extending it into space, breaking through the mute boundaries of the skin” (Betsky 1997: 26, 22). The gestures he is referring to relate to sex, the unequivocal defining factor of queer subjectivity; in Betsky’s opinion:

What I am calling queer space is that which appropriates certain aspects of the material world in which we all live, composes them into an unreal or artificial space, and uses this counter construction to create the freespace [*sic*] of orgasm that dissolves the material world (Betsky 1997: 17, 18).

Through the sexual identity of the occupant or architect Betsky analyses canonical architecture to show how it can be read as a queer space. Looking to the gay architect, Philip Johnson (1906–2005), for instance, Betsky believes his work queers modernism in bold ways (I briefly mentioned this part of Betsky’s book in the introduction, but here I want to elaborate). As one of the most famous “perverters” in the United States, Johnson appropriated and pushed the styles of other designers, most notably Mies van der Rohe (1886–1969), in his creation of a home for himself. Betsky observes how the house relates to the sexual body: “The Glass House was architecture stripped naked, but it was also a box of mirrors that reflected as it revealed... the inhabitant could reveal himself, mirror himself...” (Betsky 1997: 114).¹⁷ The mirror is a device that Betsky returns to on several occasions to link architecture to gay sex – and one that I return to in the last section of this chapter on gay domestic aesthetics. He suggests queer space finds itself in the mirror, a space that is strangely haunting where everything we see is reversed and destabilised. In this space an alternative vision is formed based on vanity and excessive personal care – two themes yoked in stereotype to gay subjectivities in wider culture. As Betsky suggests, the ultimate purpose of the mirror for queers is to prepare themselves for sexual contact (Betsky 1997: 17).

¹⁷ Architectural historian Alice T. Friedman also discusses the queerness of Johnson’s Glass House (Friedman 1998a) but in reference to notions of ‘camp’: “like camp, with its heavy emphasis on irony, exaggeration, artifice, and of course humor” the Glass House is “an obvious and clearly ironic reference to the architecture of the traditional American family home and to the sentimentalized view of domesticity that had gained widespread currency since the late nineteenth century” (Friedman 1998a: 152). While the Glass House exposed Johnson’s sexuality, the separate brick building, built four years later to serve as a bedroom, “seems to reference Johnson’s hidden gay sexuality”; thus its contrastingly visually impenetrable brick walls act like a “closet” (Friedman 2010: 56–57). More recently in an unpublished essay Mark Stern extends this argument. Stern believes the four elements of camp as put forward by queer theorist Jack Babuscio (1993) – irony, aestheticism, theatricality, and humour – are all present in this work of architecture. The irony of a glass house inhabited by two men in a long-term relationship in plain sight to outsiders in a homophobic period would have been humorous to any visitor that was let in on their secret; theatricality and aestheticism are also discussed at length in the essay (Stern 2012).

He closes his book by suggesting that “queer space is, in fact, in danger of disappearing” (Betsky 1997: 192). In supporting this grand statement Betsky aligns himself with an assimilationist argument, that from the early 1980s the AIDS crisis has made queers disappear into suburbia, respectability and anonymity. Since then, queers have wanted to become ‘normal’: “the life of queer men and women is dissolving into pieces and parts of an endlessly developing sameness” (Betsky 1997: 14). In fact, with the following quote, one can see why Betsky looks to peripheral spaces and those tied to queer sex: “queers haven’t found their identity in child rearing or the home, so the purpose of queer space is sex” (Betsky 1997: 20). Despite the obvious generalisation, this approach puts forward a model of queer space that explicitly looks beyond the domestic, which as I go on to show is an important site for the negotiation of LGBTQ identity and for the queering of heteronormativity. Before going on to offer a few more critiques, I want to acknowledge the period in which *Queer Space* was written. Betsky’s work was a bold move to bring the activism of the day into the academy. Moreover, Betsky brought sexuality and same-sex desire specifically into the field of architecture – a discipline, which, feminists have shown, has long suffered from an ‘old boys’ ethos where males clearly outnumber females and heteronormative conservative ideals reign.¹⁸

Betsky’s approach is different to the one I take. His arguments do not work to create room for multiple non-heterosexual subjectivities in space, but rather reinforce the views of sexual minorities as different, as outsiders, as sex-driven men who inhabit peripheral spaces. One is left wondering, while some gay men might proudly identify in this way, what about other LGBTQ subjectivities that may not? Even famous gay men in history can be left out of Betsky’s argument that sex and desire define queer space. In his study looking at three well-known same-sex couples in British history, art historian John Potvin observes: “Betsky’s definition excludes the interiors fashioned by... countless... male and female same-sex couples who dared to live a life of bourgeois respectability, and yet outside of companionate marriage” (Potvin forthcoming: c.12).

¹⁸ In their Future Trends Survey (December 2011) the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) noted women make up just 21% of staff in architectural firms in the UK (Anon. 2012b; see also Waite 2012). My own experience of working in a heteronormative firm was noted in the introductory chapter (see also Ramchurn 2013a for a narrative of experiencing homophobia in the workplace). Stonewall has recently reported in the *Architects’ Journal* that no architecture firms or construction companies feature in its Workplace Equalities Index of employers which support LGB diversity (Ramchurn 2013b). The fact that this was noted in a major architectural periodical and that the RIBA hosted a debate in March 2012 called *Out in Architecture*, might hopefully work towards improving inequalities in the profession.

With the privilege of hindsight, one can see that the arguments in *Queer Space* are dated. By focusing on iconic examples of architecture and famous instances in history, Betsky clearly defines queer space as peripheral to the everyday experience. But in light of my focus on the non-canonical built environment, I argue that the focus of a queer spatialised reading needs to be brought home, which is not to say, quietly assimilated. In other words, the architecture of the standard home “has been and is a crucial site for queer experience, understandings, and articulations of the self, community and subculture” (Cook forthcoming: c.5) – whether as a place to hide one’s secret, a private space where one could dress or act as one wishes, a safe enclosure to fantasise about another person of the same sex or even to bring a partner home. To reinforce this point I look to art historian Michael Hatt who has shown the domestic environment of sexual minorities has not just been a closed-off private space removed from the public realm. Referring to the aesthetic movement in domestic environments of the late-nineteenth century, such as Oscar Wilde’s library in his family home in sixteen Tite Street, London, Hatt argues:

these interiors were not closets, that is, they were not spaces where a true homosexual self resided apart from the world ... they were, rather, attempts to create spaces where private desire and public self were integrated, where all one’s experience could be invoked and unified (Hatt 2007: 105).

Following Hatt, this thesis investigates the ordinary spaces where identity was, and still is, regularly performed; in doing so I take a different approach from Betsky. Yet, in critiquing him I recognise his contribution: like the experience of Bonnevier, whose architectural text I turn to now, Betsky held the door open to architectural studies wherein LGBTQ identity is foregrounded allowing me to enter into a dissertation topic I might never have encountered, or been permitted to research, otherwise (Bonnevier 2007: 392).

As suggested, the second more recently published, queer architectural text that I want to discuss which looks to canonical instances of architecture – and that has also influenced this thesis – is Bonnevier’s *Behind Straight Curtains: Towards a Queer Feminist Theory of Architecture* (2007). In her work, Bonnevier offers a creative feminist and queer reading of architecture *as* performance. As hinted with the first part of her title, the curtain – which can be found in the theatrics of a staged show or in the everyday lived space of a domestic environment – stands in for the key theoretical framework utilised throughout the text: Butler’s gender performativity theory (outlined in the first section of this chapter). Following Butler who argues that the restricting categories of identity are culturally constructed and

performed through the repetition of appropriate acts in time, Bonnevier observes that as an integral part of our culture, architecture plays an important role in the inscription of gender ideologies and sexual norms. Thus, architecture and performativity go hand in hand: “since architecture is produced culturally, performativity is built into all architecture” (Bonnevier 2007: 369). Bonnevier builds on the earlier work of Sanders who also put forward this claim: “architecture behaves as one of the subjectivating norms that constitute gender performativity” (Sanders 1996: 13; cited in Bonnevier 2007: 34). Probyn made an even earlier similar claim when she argued:

space is a pressing matter and it matters which bodies where and how press up against it. Most important of all are who these bodies are with: in what historical and actual spatial configuration they find and define themselves (Probyn 1995: 81).

Looking to the public bathroom, for instance, Bonnevier suggests, one can see how “gender is repeatedly inscribed in architecture as two stable categories” – one is forced to enter the appropriate gendered room (Bonnevier 2007: 37; see also Bonnevier 2012: 717).¹⁹ Along with the example of the bathroom, another is the master bedroom: its “performative force of authority” repeatedly exists in our homes (Bonnevier 2007: 369). Through the continuous performance of designing, constructing, and inhabiting architecture, norms become naturalised. One final example includes the heterosexual couple with children, which are the *de facto* occupiers architects think of when designing single family houses. Friedman has commented that the nuclear family ideology works to “separate and allocate space according to a patriarchal model, regardless of the needs and preferences of individual clients and households” (Friedman 1998b: 85; Bonnevier 2012: 717).

Despite the restricting effect normative performativity has on oppressed subjectivities, Bonnevier notes that “any building yields an excess of possibilities”; and indeed her text is optimistic showing the ways sexual minorities queer normative architecture. In other words, architecture may provide the script “but is always full of other possible behaviors and misinterpretations” (Bonnevier 2012: 717).²⁰ Bonnevier

¹⁹ In *Queering Bathrooms* (2010) Cavanagh argues that bathroom design needs to be rethought so not to reproduce heteronormative and gender oppression. Further, in her review of this text, architectural historian Barbara Penner comments that toilets keep social categories in place: “toilets are powerful lenses through which to analyse how space articulates and maintains social difference: differences between Ladies and Gents, White and Coloured, Western and Asian or Christian and Muslim” (Penner 2012: 543).

²⁰ Williams (2013: 193) makes a similar point in the conclusion of *Sex and Buildings*. Referring to the repressive look of his own Victorian Edinburgh street he notes: “the outward propriety of my street concealed a remarkable variety of sexual lives, virtually none of which matched the standards claimed

specifically looks at the ways in which inhabitants perform space through three distinct case studies, or “enactments of architecture, where the actors and the acts are entangled with the built environment” (Bonnevier 2007: 15). The three enactments of architecture that each form a contained part in the book are: architect Eileen Gray’s (1878–1976) home, E.1027, in southern France near Monaco; the literary salon of author Natalie Barney (1876–1972) at twenty rue Jacob in Paris; and Swedish Nobel Prize laureate in literature, novelist Selma Lagerlöf’s (1858–1940) estate, Mårbacka, in Värmland County, Sweden.

True to the performative theme, Bonnevier presents each case-study as an informal lecture script which begins in Stockholm and soon magically travels to the building discussed. Thus through a creative travelogue, where the lecturer and many audience members are lesbian and gay themselves, they enact a journey around and within the architecture: this works to create a theatrical piece of work which “activate[s] the buildings for the reader, in order to make them come alive as subjects” (Bonnevier 2007: 389). Adding to the queerness, guest appearances by the historical figures themselves (as well as friends and lovers) show up in the performance. Through the lectures Bonnevier makes a convincing case that each building and its occupants worked together to create a queer performance, one where the architecture plays as an important role as the occupants who came to inhabit it. In the second lecture, for instance, she explains how the literary salon held almost every week for over sixty years in the home of Barney “operated through bodies and walls, conversations and costumes, furniture and intrigues [*sic*], and thereby created a queer scene” (Bonnevier 2007: 374). The house itself was not a passive backdrop but it, along with the garden structure, known as *Temple a L'Amitié*, actively participated in a queering of convention where lesbian women came together in a safe space in what was a strict society where women and minorities had few civil rights. Thus, the enactment of the literary salon was an “*overtly performative architecture*; that is, an architecture which appears in the event, through the actors and the actions, at the same time as it relies on the physical container” (Bonnevier 2007: 374; emphasis in original).

Read together, the three case studies offer a unique feminist and queer theory of architecture, one which critiques the methods by which architectural history is conducted and recorded. The contribution of Bonnevier is commended by Rendell

by the buildings themselves... Human beings will not radically change their sexual habits because of the way their surroundings are organized: they simply adapt.”

who notes that this work is part of the larger shift towards more than just descriptions of content but the defining of new critical positions (Rendell 2012: 1996). Like my own agenda, Bonnevier seeks to queer heteronormative architecture: “to find strategies for resistance to, and transgression of normative orders”. Bonnevier notes what her queer reading offers for the study of architecture when she writes: “To understand buildings as queer performative acts, and not static preconditions, opens architecture to interpretations and makes it less confined within normative constraints” (Bonnevier 2007: 22).

Behind Straight Curtains is a contextually theorised, distinct feminist and queer architectural history. Yet, despite its ambition to open up architecture, it looks exclusively to three exceptional spaces owned by three female “heroes of cultural history”. Bonnevier does qualify the circumstances within which each protagonist lived, when she suggests that each was wealthy enough to build and “live in a way that eludes most people” (Bonnevier 2007: 20). However, future research could follow Bonnevier’s performative critique and look to architecture that more people inhabit – for instance, non-celebrated domestic space – which might also work towards her goal of transforming reality (Bonnevier 2007: 402).

Bonnevier’s research as well as other work drawn from in this section have looked exclusively at peripheral and in some cases exceptional spaces, and although I have argued that this approach has its limitations for affecting the everyday spaces the majority of society inhabits today, I am not suggesting it should be dismissed. The recording of history tends to be reserved for famous people and well-known architectural examples. A brief look to two relevant scholars illustrates my point. In the *Women and the Making of the Modern Home* (1998c) Friedman traces unconventional approaches in famous architectures that have stimulated cultural change. Similarly, Reed, in *Bloomsbury Rooms: Modernism, Subculture and Domesticity*, points out that “Bloomsbury’s [collective of famous] artists dedicated themselves, individually and collectively, to creating the conditions of domesticity outside mainstream definitions of home and family” (Reed 2004: 7). The focus on famous case-studies can be dictated by the historian’s research methodologies available as well as their interests. For instance, in Cook’s forthcoming historical book, *Queer Domesticities*, he has been more drawn to extraordinary figures, although not exclusively, than I have been, but this is counter-balanced by his interest in also uncovering a history of grass-root, non-famous domesticity. Along with looking to celebrated figures like film director and artist Derek Jarman (1942–

1994), Cook also draws on interview material with inhabitants of gay squats in 1970s Brixton, London. In an already published article, “ ‘Gay Times’: Identity, Locality, Memory, and the Brixton Squats in 1970’s London”, he presents an example of radical queer domesticity. Much like a portion of interviewees from my own research, in his study Cook found that despite being in an exclusively queer domestic environment, the space was infused less with gay politics and more with other issues (in this case political belief, race and class) (Cook 2013). Following the work of Cook on non-famous queer domesticities but transitioning to a more contemporary study, it is my aim to complement the body of work in this section that highlights the ways architecture is subverted through use. What this historical literature has been successful at showing is the subversive ways that famous spaces and their occupants have challenged normative understandings of gender and sexuality through radical interventions.

With the research sited in the existing literature, I turn to the final part of this chapter which looks at architectural spaces where minority identity is foregrounded. Although the focus shifts from analysing text to analysing domestic space, I continue the discussion of looking to peripheral and in this case clearly exceptional spaces. I suggest these spaces need to be understood in the context of their clients’ wealth and status. One of the reasons for including this section is to break down stereotypes of the queer home, specifically those linked to fabulous aesthetics and high-end interior design. Keeping in mind these projects, as the reader continues through the remainder of the thesis – wherein I show the multiple ways in which LGBTQ homes queer heteronormativity through small-scale interventions, domestic materiality and lifestyle choice – what I hope becomes clear is that queer domesticity cannot be normalised and is much more complicated than culture and cliché would have us believe: one runs into trouble with normalising queer space generally and a gay domestic aesthetic specifically.

A gay domestic aesthetic

Looking specifically to architecture that foregrounds minority sexuality, both in the discipline’s literature but also in some of the projects that have been built, a specific kind of gay male space is presented – one which does not offer, on the surface, many affinities with the everyday and non-celebrated spaces analysed in the subsequent chapters. The projects discussed in this section build on the earlier two sections: as a result of the efforts of feminist and queer theorists who have worked to

deconstruct hegemonic frameworks, increasingly over the last few decades architects and architectural writers have begun to foreground sexual minority identity in space and this has resulted in, for better or worse, like some of the existing queer literature, a normalised presentation of gay domestic aesthetic, wherein the homes, aspirations and experiences of diverse LGBTQ people risk being overlooked.

The stereotype of the gay man as arbiter of domestic style is widely known. Media representations, such as lifestyle television programmes like Chanel 5's *How Not to Decorate* (featuring Colin McAllister and Justin Ryan) or Bravo's *Queer Eye* (originally *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*) play into and at the same time fuel this impression.²¹ In an essay by Sanders (2004a) the problematic nature of sexuality-based stereotypes in the architecture profession are discussed. "Curtain Wars", Sanders argues, are "symptomatic of our deepest and most ingrained anxieties about the nature of masculinity, femininity and homosexuality" (Sanders 2004a: 90). The site of the curtain, he explains, represents the shared anxiety of the discipline: the architect's curtain wall and the interior designer's fabric curtain are each invested with gendered and sexuality tropes; overturning each is an on-going challenge (Sanders 2004a: 96). Research from as far back as the 1980s has investigated the way gay men have played a role in gentrification of urban neighbourhoods (Bouthillette 1994; Castells 1983 (discussed in the previous section); Knopp 1995; Lauria and Knopp 1985). Looking specifically at two television shows in Australia, Gorman-Murray has more recently argued that this presentation of gay domestic aesthetic results in "challenging the idea of the home as simply a site of privatized family life, queering notions of domesticity" (Gorman-Murray 2006b: 243). But at the same time "the association of gay masculinity with homely aesthetics can domesticate, regulate and sanitize public perceptions of gay men, circumscribing the limits of acceptable gay masculinity" (Gorman-Murray 2006b: 243). In this section I analyse domestic spaces that fit into this stereotype to extend this argument by suggesting these spaces also need to be understood explicitly in terms of intersections of wealth, class and showmanship – meaning celebrity or a willingness to show off the space. Moreover, as I show in further chapters, these homes stand in remarkable contrast to the non-celebrated homes I visited and draw from in the research.

²¹ This stereotype is almost exclusive to gay men; lesbian women or other sexual minorities are left out. Although there are other generalisations reserved for these groups, including the 'butch' lesbian as expert do-it-yourself (DIY) home renovator.

Photographs from a recent article in monthly magazine *Toronto Life* (Bozikovic 2012) begins to capture what I mean by a ‘gay domestic aesthetic’ (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1 – Images of Raymond and Laird’s home which present a gay domestic aesthetic to readers of Toronto Life.

In this short article Raymond and Laird, a gay couple from Toronto, exhibit their home and interior decorating skills.²² Along with six photographs, a brief paragraph is included in which the journalist commends the space. His text gives the men’s interior decorating skills authority when he comments, “The overall effect is quirkily stylish, like a well-curated boutique hotel” (Bozikovic 2012). Few may dispute the interior space is well designed, but despite giving us brief background contextualising information, the reader is left to assume that this is a typical (normal) gay home. However, I would argue that this example of gay domestic aesthetic encapsulates the three intersections of identity that make it an exclusive and atypical gay home. The men are successful – one of the men is the editor of Air Canada’s

²² Potvin notes that since 2000 there has been a noticeable increase in the amount of gay male owned domestic interiors reproduced in newsprint and magazines. Coincidentally, he also notes that the historic Cabbagetown district of Toronto hosts its annual Tour of Homes every autumn, and in 2012 seven out of the eight homes on display were owned by male same-sex couples (Potvin forthcoming: c.1, c.13).

inflight magazine, *enRoute*, while the other owns his own architectural photography practice – and one could assume wealthy, given that many of the domestic items are expensive, including an Eero Saarinen womb chair (upper left in Figure 2.1).

Secondly, and relatedly, the couple are middle-to-upper class – they both hold professional degrees in architecture. Further, with a prominent wall of books, they project their cultural capital. Finally, the fact that the men have agreed to exhibit their home and even pose in the cover image means they have a desire to show off their home – this is also evident in the title: “Great Spaces: A Downtown Couple Shows Off their Enthusiasm for Mid-Century Design” (Bozikovic 2012). The exclusivity of this space is further made clear in that a national magazine is unlikely to exhibit an ordinary domestic space.

On the surface the home of Raymond and Laird presents a gay domestic aesthetic that is well-designed and exclusive, but their home can be further analysed using the work of existing spatialised research on gay domestic aesthetics. Before returning to this home, though, a look to one building material is necessary to see its relationship to gay domesticity in architectural studies. Glass is a building material that connects both high-modernist architecture at home and beyond to gay occupied spaces, or at least scholars say so. In section two I outlined Betsky’s analysis of Johnson’s glass house as a queer space because Johnson himself, the occupant, exposed himself in a voyeuristic way making private interior life public externally (Betsky 1997: 114). Thus through the transparent medium of glass the traditional divide between interior and exterior, private and public, are transgressed.

Similarly, and writing just one year later in a special issue of *Architectural Design*, Consuming Architecture, art historian Simon Ofield theorised the glass block as a queer building material *par excellence*, by suggesting “The glass brick has the potential to become the exemplary architectural symbol of contemporary queer theory” (Ofield 1998: 49) – like Betsky, Ofield’s study does not, as it would suggest, look at diverse queer sexualities but a specific group of gay male subjectivities: men with the capital to frequent gay commercial clusters and the desire to cruise in public toilets. Ofield looks to a gay bar in London’s Soho district and a public cottage used for cruising in London’s east end which both use glass block in their interior design. In both cases the building material is employed to offer “a distorted view” between the toilet area and the more public area adjacent to it; thus it opaquely offers a view “often of that which should remain out of sight. It both enables and disturbs vision”. The opaque glass block based on this reading, Ofield claims, is akin to ‘queer’,

which “in theory, can be understood as being somewhat precariously situated between identity and its disturbance. It is the ambiguity within queer theory which suggests that glass brick as its symbol” (Ofield 1998: 49). Through “the passage of natural light through glass”, Ofield concludes, in the site of the public toilet frequented for public sex and in the toilet of the gay bar, Rupert Street, there exists a “shared investment in identification” where “the delineation of homosexual form is found” (Ofield 1998: 51). Although a creative reading, Ofield’s argument is fraught with problems. Not only is the diversity of queer identity flattened onto the experiences of a selection of gay men who frequent gay commercial establishments in central London and use a public toilet for sex in Hackney, east London, but the intricacies of highly theorised discipline which argues for a breaking down of restricting regimes is compressed into one enclosed building material.

Despite being the only academic to my knowledge that suggests glass blocks are a specific material used in gay spaces, Ofield builds on the more common trend of suggesting glass can generally be found in spaces inhabited by gay men. Ofield draws attention to this trend when he suggests Rupert Street decided to use glass block in its toilets after commissioning research, which found that “social visibility allied to political progress” (Ofield 1998: 51). Large glass windows on the front, and glass throughout the interior, it was found, would move the gay bar out of the repressive and reclusive 1980s into the more modern and accepting 1990s. Andersson (2008: 90) observes that another bar in the area, Village Soho, employed large plate glass open-fronted windows to mimic the first such bar to do so in Britain, Manto in Manchester: “With its 30 foot plate glass windows, Manto has been referred to as a “queer architectural statement” ” (Andersson 2008: 90, quoting Skeggs *et al.* 2004: 1843; see also Binnie 1995). Andersson continues the discussion of Manto by suggesting its “goldfish-bowl windows magnify and underlie a gay presence” (Andersson 2008: 90, quoting Quilley 1997: 278). Williams adds to this by commenting that a number of architectural interventions at Manto – like the internal mezzanine, the large windows as well as other operable windows – worked to celebrate the sexual culture on display: “it was designed as if it now had nothing to hide” (Williams 2011: 263, quoting DJ Dave Haslam 1999: 201).

Although these academics are looking at gay commercial space and its relation to glass as a building material, Bonnevier has commented on a lesbian domestic space and its use of glass. In an essay on Eileen Gray’s E.1027, Bonnevier observes that through the use of floor to ceiling accordion foldable glass doors, the

“connotations of inside and outside are disturbed – queered”, and as a result traditional binary thinking is deconstructed (Bonnevier 2005: 169, 170). In addition, I suggest another academic has implicitly drawn links between glass and a queer domestic space: architectural historian Elizabeth Darling.

Darling offers an historical overview of Mansfield Forbes’s (1889–1936) Cambridge home, Finella. For his leased home, Forbes – a “small, androgynous, homosexual” Cambridge Don (Darling 2011: 131) – commissioned architect Raymond McGrath (1903–1977) to redesign the interior spaces. The inspiration for the new design would come from Forbes’s ancestry on the eastern shores of Scotland. Finella, “or Fionella”, was a queen of the region that died at the end of the tenth century, and “by tradition she was the inventor of glass, and it was in this material that she had her palace built”. Thus along with water, which alludes to the way in which she died by jumping into a waterfall to avoid capture, glass takes a prominent role in the design of the house (Darling 2011: 138). Darling also connects the link between the parlance that sees ‘queen’ as a gay man and his choice of a Scottish queen namesake, a connection that both Forbes and his friends who visited the home would have made (Darling 2011: 139; see also Houlbrook 2005: 7). With details including a water fountain in the dining room, and glass surfaces and glazed materials throughout, the house served as a modern experiment for Forbes and McGrath. Darling suggests the ground floor hallway in particular “represented the most complete exposition of the water and glass motif suggested by the house’s namesake”. A further quote shows the reliance on glass in this space:

The house was entered through a new pair of steel-framed doors glazed with panels of Georgian-wired glass. Once inside, visitors looked ahead to an interior intended, by day, to simulate Finella’s palace of glass. Above the doors was a coved ceiling constructed from two-foot panes of silvered ribbed cast plate glass. This was carried on a cornice of fluted gold glass, which, in turn, was supported by dentils of clear plate glass; keystones of the same material were placed over the doors to the dining room, the servery, and the morning room, while each door threshold contained panels of ground glass, lit from below (Darling 2011: 143–144).

Darling demonstrates the renovation to the home was, in the words of a review for the *Architects’ Journal* (Anon. 1929), a “symphony of glass”, yet she does not foreground the connection between the patron’s sexuality and glass in her essay. However, she does draw brief attention to the link between reflective qualities in interior design materials and the occupant’s homosexuality – which was becoming more recognised but at the same time still necessitated internalisation, privatisation:

The fact that a majority of the materials used at Finella comprised thinly layered, often reflective, surfaces, and were, theoretically at least, impermanent and demountable is significant... Moreover, the reflectivity of Finella's surfaces, which was frequently obfuscated by the use of colored metal leafs behind the mirror glass or on textured plaster board, turned visitors' attention back on themselves and kept everything at surface level (Darling 2011: 152).

With this quote Darling hints at the connection between a gay domestic aesthetic, mirrors and polished surfaces. Along with incorporating water and glass into the home's design, a large mirror was placed strategically at the end of the main ground floor hallway. Thus through the reflective qualities apparent in water, glass and mirrors, a gay domestic aesthetic beyond simply high-design begins to take shape.

Mirrors, glass and glass blocks are intimately connected; after all in Forbes's time a 'looking *glass*' would have been found in many upper-class homes. In fact both Betsky and Sanders explicitly put forward a gay aesthetic that favours mirrors. As shown in section two, Betsky uses the mirror as an interior design device linked to queer space. Not only is the mirror important for preparing oneself for sexual contact but it encapsulates what queer space is: "A strangely haunting [and destabilising] space, one where the world comes back to us in a reversed manner. Everything is still there, but out of place" (Betsky 1997: 21). The mirror thus distorts the reality of the heteronormative space in which gay men have to negotiate their sexual subjectivity; it creates a space that challenges, liberates and frees one's self.

The conceptualisation of the mirror as counter-space draws from the earlier work of Foucault. In a 1969 lecture given in French Foucault theorised places of otherness which exist in our culture but cannot be entered and are beyond our physical reality. The value in these spaces is that they "constitute a sort of counter arrangement, of effectively realized utopia, in which all the real arrangements... are at one and the same time represented, challenged, and overturned" (Foucault 1997 [1967]: 352). While a utopia by definition "is fundamentally unreal", heterotopias are "places which are absolutely other with respect to all the arrangements that they reflect" (Foucault 1997 [1967]: 352). Thus a mirror, as a place neither here nor there, one that exists just beyond our reality which can be easily pointed to, but at the same time 'mirrors' reality, lies somewhere between the two *-topias*. Foucault explains:

[The mirror] is, after all, a utopia, in that it is a place without a place. In it, I see myself where I am not, in an unreal space that opens up potentially beyond its surface; there I am down there where I am not, a sort of shadow that makes my appearance visible to myself, allowing me to look at myself where I do not exist: utopia of the mirror. At the same time, we are dealing with a heterotopia. The mirror really exists and has a kind of comeback

effect on the place that I occupy: starting from it, in fact, I find myself absent from the place where I am, in that I see myself in there. Starting from that gaze which to some extent is brought to bear on me, from the depths of that virtual space which is on the other side of the mirror, I turn back on myself, beginning to turn my eyes on myself and reconstitute myself where I am in reality (Foucault 1997 [1967]: 352).

For Sanders it is this capability to transcend reality, through the creation of “homoerotic possibilities”, that makes the mirror such a key component of a queer space in which many gay men regularly inhabit: the gym (Sanders 1996: 23). To make this argument Sanders draws from an essay in his edited collection, *Stud*, by American literary theorist Marcia Ian, who analyses the gym as a unique space in which the male body – regardless of sexual object choice – becomes the object of his fellow bodybuilder’s gaze (Ian 1996). Mirrors are almost always a key component of a gym which promotes looking: “within the confines of the gym, whose mirrored surfaces disperse the gaze in many directions, men willingly submit to a process of scopophilic objectification, readily assuming a receptive position so that they might ultimately attain physical supremacy” (Sanders 1996: 22–23; see also Sanders 2004b: 124). Thus along with challenging heteronormative gender roles, the mirror is at once a site of masculine reassurance, homoerotic anxiety and an opportunity for same-sex desire: an important interior design feature, according to some scholars, in queer spaces.

Taking into account the scholarly work which extends a gay aesthetic to include glass and mirrors, one could look at the home of Raymond and Laird, discussed at the beginning of this section, in a new light. Common throughout the photographs are reflective qualities: whether the high-gloss of a marble table, light bouncing off glazed-covered artwork or the shiny kitchen backsplash, and of course the actual glass dining table, glass and glass-like qualities can be found in all of the photographs of the couple’s home. In addition, one of the items discussed in the article and shown in the larger, lower image of Figure 2.1 is a “mirror screen custom-made by a local handyman” (Bozikovic 2012). Through the reflection of the mirror, the prominent feature wall of books – which, echoing the rainbow colour coding of the gay pride flag, is perhaps the most obvious way the space relates to gay cultural symbols – is mirrored on both sides of the living room. This effect mirrors reality creating a larger, amplified gay space. In other words, looking beyond the plane of the mirror one’s eyes are turned back on oneself and at the same time the gay domestic space is magnified, and reality itself is distorted. Raymond and Laird’s home has helped uncover a gay domestic aesthetic, which unlike tropes of gay male

identity does not relate to irony, theatricality or humour, typical characteristics of camp – although it does support a fourth characteristic, aestheticism (Babuscio 1993). Instead this home presents a gay domestic aesthetic tied to an intersectionality of wealth, class, and showmanship, and also to a penchant for glass, shiny surfaces and mirrors. Each of these aspects and more can also be found in a grander example of gay domestic aesthetic, a master planned LGBTQ retirement village in southern California.

Led by the New York-based architecture firm Hollwich Kushner, BOOM (Figure 2.2) is an experimental housing project to be located near Palm Springs, California, and construction is set to begin in late 2013 (Hollwich 2011).

Figure 2.2 – An aerial rendering depicting the BOOM community in the desert near Palm Springs, California.

Ten award-winning architectural firms – including Diller Scofidio + Renfro and Joel Sanders Architect – were each given a portion of land to have complete freedom in design. There were only two requirements, according to one of the many online media sources to announce the project:

their structures had to epitomize high design in order to fight the stereotypical look of retirement communities, and... none of the firms could have ever done work around aging before, so they could come to the project with fresh ideas (Walker no date).

The collective vision, as optimistically suggested on the project marketing website, is to “build a new icon of design that dares to redefine home, community and how we live together” (BOOM Palm Springs, *BOOM is a Bold New Community*). One

innovation that offers a challenge to home, specifically the patriarchal and heteronormative hierarchy of master/non-master, is with equal-sized bedroom design organised around common living areas (see also the introduction chapter) (email communication 20 June 2012; Kennedy 2011). Project architect Matthias Hollwich aims to use architecture to usher in “new ageing”, to move away from the depressing reality of retirement homes – to “promote design projects that rethink what it means to be old”. Although not exclusively for sexual minorities, one of the reasons the marketing is geared towards the LGBTQ community is, Hollwich observes, because “nothing has been “typical” ” for this group and “who is better to revolutionize, challenge, and change the “typical” retirement idea?” (BOOM Palm Springs, *BOOM Thought Series: Is Boom Gay?*). Further, this is a group of people who have an expanding presence in society yet still remain hidden in discussions of ageing (Zeiger 2011; see also chapter 4). Hollwich is hopeful that opening the retirement village to people age 40 and above will allow community bonds to be developed at home that do not need to be broken as one ages (Walker no date). Despite their ambitious goals to establish a strong sense of community for 300 residences in eight neighbourhoods through programme features – which include a gym, a spa, four parks, an open-air market, ten swimming pools, four restaurants, two nightclubs, five outdoor cafes, five performance spaces, a wellness centre, and a sports centre (BOOM Palm Springs, *Fact Sheet*) – the design reinforces exclusivity. Reliance on walking – evident in that the project does not include roads for cars in order to force people to travel on foot and develop a sense of community (Walker no date) – may deter many older people with mobility issues. In addition, programming such as a rooftop mist disco, designed by the out gay architect Charles Renfro, is clearly not for all older LGBTQ people.²³

A gay domestic aesthetic can be seen in the numerous architectural renderings, specifically through the use of glass as a primary building material. Responding to the call for high design, many of the architects put forward renderings that include glass curtain walls, which work to break down the divide between interior and exterior, forcing inhabitants to engage with those who happen to pass by and further develop community. Sanders’s design, for instance, includes clear glass connecting one façade of each domestic space with a shared communal swimming

²³ In a recent article on Out.com Renfro draws attention to the gay high life that being a partner of a very successful firm affords him: “I live in Chelsea, I have a house on Fire Island, I’m redesigning the Pines – how much more faggy [*sic*] can you get?”. I suggest this most certainly influences his design for BOOM, and Renfro would agree: “Our work is influenced by who we are. ... It’s exciting to learn that, oh boy, my work is inspired by that side of my personality” (Bernstein 2012).

pool that stretches the length of several houses (Figure 2.3). Presumably on a morning swim one could easily peer into each living space and at the same time be the subject of its occupants' gaze.

Figure 2.3 – Joel Sanders's design for BOOM includes a communal swimming pool and glazed façades helping to further a sense of community interaction.

A look to Renfro's proposal additionally shows the way that glass is used as a key design feature, which equally works to connect interior spaces with the exterior and in doing so reduce privacy (Figure 2.4).

Figure 2.4 – 'The Waves' proposal by Diller Scofidio + Renfro uses glass as a key component to build community.

The image at left shows people seated on a sofa inside watching pedestrians pass by. Moreover, recalling the discussion of glass as a component in a gay domestic aesthetic, this image draws even clearer links between glass and a specific stereotype of gay identity – leather-clad gay men which appear at left.

Although the project aims to redefine the retirement experience through architecture, a brief look at additional renderings shows that at the same time it also plays on many stereotypes of exclusive gay identity. Figure 2.5 brings together four BOOM architectural renderings that use gay cultural stereotypes and accepted forms of identity in order to sell the project's vision.

Figure 2.5 – Many of the project renderings reproduce stereotypes of gay male identity.

What is striking at first glance is that these four renderings are deeply representative of race and sex inequalities. Simply put very few visible racial and ethnic minorities can be found in any of the renderings and the above ones include only men – although children are visible. This reinforces the exclusion of lesbian women along with trans people from commercial spaces like the gay village and the larger gay community (Casey 2004). A further look at other renderings used for publicity illuminates a similar finding. Only a few women are depicted in these public spaces, which shows that the separate spheres ideology, that feminism has worked so hard to upend, still exists – at least in the project's marketing.

Two of the images in Figure 2.5 explicitly play on gay identity stereotypes. The image at upper right, a boutique hotel designed by Sara + Vuga, depicts two male figures walking hand in hand away from the viewer towards the shimmering pool, which is instantly recognisable as the gay identity type known as 'bears' – stocky, muscular yet fat, hairy gay men. One could assume these figures have been consciously placed with their backs to the viewer and in a translucent haze. The

‘bear’s’ fat, almost naked body would not appeal or be ‘appropriate’ to society more generally. Interestingly, many of these images were used in mainstream publications such as *Co.Design*, an online community focusing on business, innovation and design (Walker no date). Yet others, including the *Los Angeles Times* (Head 2011) and the *Huffington Post* (Kennedy 2011) ran news articles about BOOM, but not surprisingly, left out the rendering of the ‘bears’. The lower left image includes a somewhat comical gay figure, which embodies a more idealised male form.

Complete with short shorts, cowboy boots and a hat, a lean, muscular and shirtless man appears to seductively dance with a palm tree. What’s more, unlike the ‘bears’ at upper right, this figure is in clear forward-facing view, dominating the centre of the image and the centre of the architecture. Despite this humorous depiction of a gay trope of the sexy, entertainer that would liven up any party, this particular rendering could leave a false impression of gay identity in the minds of viewers. The extent to which BOOM renderings reproduce ‘acceptable’ body images is made clear in that only younger, white bodies are depicted shirtless. In all the images, older men are fully clothed, reinforcing stereotypes that the older body is less-sexy and even sexually inactive (King and Cronin 2010: 86; see also chapter four of this thesis). There is one exception to this which can be seen in the upper left image of Figure 2.5, but again their placement is strategic: in the distant background, one can barely make out three older male figures standing in the communal swimming pool. Figure 2.3, above, also depicts the young/old body dichotomy that BOOM reproduces. At right, three attractive young men parade their shirtless bodies while two older fully clothed men look down from the balcony above – it is clear that the project’s architects know what sells property. These renderings show that cultural stereotypes and ‘acceptable’ body types are reproduced even in a gay architectural project that seeks to be revolutionary. BOOM’s depictions of gay men in renderings also support the tripartite intersectionality, wealth, class and showmanship, evident in a gay domestic aesthetic discussed at the beginning of this section.

The depiction of gay domesticity at BOOM is clearly one geared to wealthy clients. Although the architects aim to create housing options to suit a variety of budgets (Kennedy 2011) – pricing has yet to be released and I was not able to get a response from the architects on this issue – many low income retirees or those on social assistance would not be able to afford to live here. The exclusivity of these domestic spaces is clear in that one must join a waiting list in order to be given the chance to apply, which further reinforces specific notions of desirable class and

power – people without access to the internet or the knowledge to sign up online would be left out. Finally, as the image of the gay man riding a palm tree and the other renderings of semi-nude bodies depict, this lifestyle is clearly one geared towards performance and showmanship. I admit, though, the architects could be drawing on the camp characteristic of irony whilst adding a touch of humour to the playful marketing. Whilst the renderings reproduce exclusive and stereotypical notions of a gay domestic aesthetic, the fact remains, though, there *is* a market for such a project and some gay people have come to expect this aesthetic. Although none of the homes visited as part of my research belonging to ordinary LGBTQ Londoners resemble the architecture presented at Boom, one final domestic space, a private house also located in the same American state, highlights the ways in which a wealthy, successful owner strives to perfect a gay domestic aesthetic. Admittedly both projects are located in California, and are therefore geographically specific and closely align with the Hollywood glamorous lifestyle, but nevertheless, these examples offer excellent depictions of a wider stereotype of a gay domestic aesthetic found beyond the specificity of this region.

The home of David Bernardi, a senior vice president for Imagine Entertainment, and his partner, is anything but typical, and on close inspection it clearly fits into the discussion of an exclusive gay domestic aesthetic (Figure 2.6).

Figure 2.6 – The Bernardi Residence, Los Angeles, California, designed by artist and architect Fritz Haeg (2008).

In an article in the New York Times, Bernardi observes that his desire for a radical renovation to a 1917 Spanish-inspired home actually had to be toned back because of functionality: “I aspired to the conceptual”, he said, “but at the end of the day I’m a gay guy who wants it to look cool and beautiful” (Cannell 2008a). In this quote

Bernardi associates his sexuality with a desire to have a home that is aesthetically pleasing. At *The Sundown Schoolhouse of Queer Home Economics*, an event discussed in depth in the final chapter, artist and architect Fritz Haeg who completed the design for the renovation drew explicit links between the client and architect's sexuality and the home's high-end gay aesthetic (Haeg 2012). Neither architect or client note other factors of identity, such as wealth, in the explanation of why the home needed to be aesthetically pleasing. Haeg began by noting the sense of instant camaraderie that existed between architect and client, based on their shared gay identity; as a result, Haeg, believed, Bernardi instantly trusted him to produce a unique design that "would [not] dutifully follow the taste herd" (Haeg 2012; Cannell 2008a). Haeg noted that due to this shared bond, the client was able to be himself, which included not needing to censor language, which is often the case when dealing with deeply heteronormative professions such as building trades.

One of the first tasks for Haeg, after securing the job, was to convince the client to write an essay about how he lived. In the final result it became clear that entertaining was a key component of the couples' home life and should influence the final design. Following this, Haeg notes, "all rooms are living rooms" which works to break the traditional divide between private and public spaces within the home (Cannell 2008b). Rather than separate public entertaining spaces from private intimate sleeping quarters, Haeg used a colour palate that is brightest at the top of the house, where one enters at street level, and gradually becomes darker as one descends into the rest of the house. The conscious choice to challenge traditional binaries is one of the ways that the Bernardi residence complements the discussion on gay domestic aesthetics.

In a conversation with a subcontractor who designed and installed an internal terrarium, a plant space that measures 1.5 metres by 1.5 metres in width by 4.2 metres in height, it became clear that this home challenges the binary of interior/exterior in creative ways (Figure 2.6).²⁴ Artist Freya Bardell shared her experiences repairing plantings and water features in the terrarium: when she is inside the space a "funny relationship" between inside and outside exists (Bardell 2012). "A sealed space carved out of the center of the house" containing its own "ecosystem with running water, simulated rain, and a wide variety of tropical plants"

²⁴ During a scholarly residence at *The Sundown Schoolhouse of Queer Home Economics* (see the concluding chapter for an in-depth discussion of my participation in this event) the artist paid a visit and our conversation soon turned to the Bernardi residence (Bardell 2012; see also Greenmeme no date).

is effectively an exterior space open to the California sun, yet within the interior space of the home (Haeg, *Studio Projects: The Bernardi Residence*). When Bardell enters the deepest, internalised space within the home, she notes “the outside in relation to me is actually the inside of the home – where David amuses himself by watching me” (Bardell 2012). The “grotto in the house” is viewable from several rooms through porthole windows. The effect is that one can always be closely connected to the planting within the interior of the house, and nature’s exterior, but at the same time remain at a comfortable distance from it within the domestic space, thus not getting one’s hands dirty (Bardell 2012). The traditional binary is not altogether removed, but rather queered.

As with many of the spaces analysed in this chapter, it is not always clear from first look that this is a gay domestic space, and indeed Bardell felt one needs to be “let in on the secret”, but then it is a case of “ah ha, of course!” (Bardell 2012). During the presentation by Haeg, the audience was treated to “the secret” and in many ways both interior and exterior design can be understood as adding to a gay domestic aesthetic. One example is apparent in Haeg’s explanation of the main feature of the design: the exterior façade. The design consists of large swooping apertures that cut away the rectangular box of the original building to reveal new voids behind. This prominent feature, along with the internal porthole windows that look into the terrarium, explain why Haeg affectionately refers to the home as the ‘glory hole house’ – an homage to user modifications to toilet partitions central to the subversive act of anonymous gay sex in cottages (Haeg 2012; Campkin and Andersson 2006).

Another example of the Bernardi house adding to a gay domestic aesthetic is with the exterior pink stucco which contains mica dust that glitters as it reflects the California sun. Not only does this draw on the stereotype of pink as a favourite colour among gay men, but the glittering reflection speaks to the exclusive nature of this home. This can be read as an example of the third intersection of gay domestic exclusivity: the performative, or desire for showiness. And given Bernardi’s production career, and the location of the home overlooking the Hollywood Hills, the glitter seems appropriate. Like the example of Raymond and Laird that began this section, Bernardi’s performative desire is apparent in that he too can be seen in photographs which were included in a national periodical. This also adds to the queering of the interior/exterior traditional divide *i.e.* the conventional privacy of the home is exposed and made public to a national audience. As a wealthy, middle-class

couple, the other two identity categories are also in place to argue this is an exclusive and atypical domestic space. However, despite infinite possibilities for exploring identity at home, homes like this one and others discussed in this section are what society generally, and gay architectural discourse specifically, have come to expect when non-heterosexual identity and home are discussed in the same breath. Very rarely are these homes discussed for what they are: a specific, wealthy and glamorous example of queer domesticity. Turning away from this small minority of exclusive spaces that have almost become normalised in architectural studies – domestic environments that the majority of people may not be able to afford or indeed, may not even desire to inhabit – this project seeks to reinvest the non-celebrated LGBTQ home with renewed interest. In saying this though, as pointed out in the introduction, it is not my intention to completely reject and deny the historical significance of stereotypes. Although they may inform the domestic spaces in this project in nuanced ways, *i.e.* through the way these participants differentiate their homes, I aim to present a new project, one looking to the everyday practices and lived experiences of a select group of Londoners, which for the most part contrasts ideologies and stereotypes.

I want to briefly explain what I have aimed *not* to do with the discussion on exclusivity linked to gay domestic aesthetics. In this section, while pointing to their specificity, I have attempted to not pass judgement on the spaces analysed. Simply put, some, but not all, non-heterosexuals aspire to create domestic spaces that draw from a gay domestic aesthetic. But as suggested, my research focuses rather on the ways in which a sample of ordinary Londoners queer domesticity in their daily lives, through the means available to them. In highlighting this aim, I move now to briefly look at a problematic text that I would argue, contrary to my own aim, passes judgement on the domestic spaces that would fit into a gay aesthetic; I include this discussion in order to show the problems that passing judgement and pathologising gay cultural expression espouses. In his popular psychology book, *The Velvet Rage: Overcoming the Pain of Growing up Gay in a Straight Man's World*, psychologist Alan Downs attempts to explain why gay men have showpiece homes like the ones discussed above (Downs 2006). In his overly generalised and problematic book, which draws from his own life experience and that of several patients, Downs argues that all gay men must go through a series of stages in order to reject the shame that was so integral to their experience of growing up gay: “any person, straight or gay, who grows up in an environment that is essentially invalidating of some core part of

themselves such as sexuality, struggles with this deeper shame” (Downs 2006: 75). And one result of compensating for shame, Downs suggests, is striving for validation from others:

We need validation to assure us that as gay men, we are worthwhile and ultimately deserving of love. The acquisition of validation is so rewarding that we become validation junkies. The more we get, the more we crave it, the better we feel, and the harder it becomes for us to tolerate invalidation (Downs 2006: 76).

As a result of this obsession to achieve validation, Downs believes, we become masters at outrageousness: “Our houses become showplaces that elicit kudos from all who enter. Our bodies become chiselled in muscle, pleasing our bedroom guests...” (Downs 2006: 76). Despite falsely generalising all gay men as guardians of “showplace” homes and embodying a near-perfect human form, Downs’s argument clearly passes judgement on gay men. His model leaves no room for experiences of growing up gay in positive environments, and overlooks other factors such as wealth and class status to explain why some gay men aspire to own homes fitting a gay domestic aesthetic; instead he suggests the reason has to do with deeply internalised shame – so deep that many gay men do not even realise they have shame in their lives. Based on his model, one could make a fairly accurate assumption that Downs would refer to Bernardi’s home, as well as Boom and others discussed in this chapter, as the house that shame built.

By outlining what a gay domestic aesthetic currently consists of, rather than suggest this needs to be rejected, I argue it needs to be understood in terms of its exclusivity in order to resist normalising the homes, desires and experiences of LGBTQ people. In the chapters that follow I aim to investigate domesticity from another angle. In doing so I draw from an oral history approach with home occupiers in order to uncover the actual ways objects, material possessions and lifestyle choices queer heteronormativity in non-celebrated London homes. It is my hope that the empirical research will work to show that stereotypes tied to gay domesticity are largely inaccurate. On this point I echo an observation of Cook’s: “[t]he everyday and material lives of queer men [and women] in relation to the home are... less easy to describe or theorize homogeneously than any glib caricature might suggest” (Cook 2012: 178). In the following chapters I look across generational differences and through the eyes of LGBTQ tradespeople in order to avoid offering monolithic representations of queer domesticity. Instead, in my argument I celebrate the diversity across the case-study where queer domesticity, and its subversion of

heteronormativity, is shown to be simultaneously exceptional, contradictory, and even subtle.

Conclusion

In his article on the streetscape project that sought to delineate the gay space of Chicago's Boy's Town as another ethnic urban area, Reed (2005) offers a valuable point to bring this literature and architectural review chapter to a close. Reed outlines the controversy that surrounded the project's main delineating pylons, from people for and against the construction: some gay people felt they were being assimilated into an area where queer identity no longer is subversive but packaged for tourists, while others cited the economic and visibility benefits the project brought. Irrespective of either side's arguments, Reed argues, the markers do not constrain or create identity; they "are a point of departure [for discussing non-heterosexual identity in the urban fabric] rather than a semiotic closure" (Reed 2005: 175). In other words, LGBTQ identity is complicated and cannot be pin-pointed or contained to architectural features in specific zones in the city and equally architectural spaces inhabited by famous or wealthy LGBTQ residents need to be understood in terms of their exclusivity. It would seem, based on the spatialised research on non-heterosexuals up to and including the first decade of the twenty-first century, that if one wants to research sexual minority identity and architecture the ordinary domestic space is not a typical focus. Following Reed, I suggest the literature and architectural spaces discussed throughout this chapter act as "a point of departure", for an alternative look at domestic architecture inhabited by LGBTQ Londoners. To avoid reproducing tropes of gay identity, something that certainly an existing gay domestic aesthetic works to do, in the empirical body of this thesis I aim to start afresh, building not on existing readings of now somewhat normalised gay space and materials, but rather relying on an oral history approach: through the interviewees' words I aim to construct an alternative domestic queer architectural history. The first chapter in the empirical body of this thesis, which I now turn to, looks specifically at how younger LGBTQ Londoners are queering heteronormativity at home.

Chapter 3

Youth Identity and Home

Introduction

In this chapter as well as the two that follow I draw from the empirical data and construct a narrative through the research transcripts. In analysing the 40 interviews, as well as the participant writing diaries, I noticed common themes among younger participants and equally distinct themes developed out of the interviews with older participants. While chapter four looks mainly at the transcripts from the latter group who have established a permanent home in London, in this chapter I draw from interviews with younger non-heterosexual Londoners – those in their twenties and thirties (and occasionally from older interviewees if memories from their youth were discussed). This chapter draws from distinct themes to show the ways in which younger LGBTQ Londoners are queering heteronormativity at home.

The first part of this chapter sets the stage by drawing from three interconnected themes that affect younger experiences of home: coming out, leaving the family home and setting up a home in early adulthood. The parental home can be an isolated space where one's sexuality remains frequently, though not exclusively, kept secret; often one flees the home in the process of coming out and identity is expressed differently in the new home. Given this trajectory of departure, arrival and return (to visit), in this section I explore how the family home relates to younger interviewees' current identity and homemaking practices. This section looks in-depth at the declarative act of coming out that many younger sexual minorities find themselves faced with as a result of heteronormativity. This act is not exclusive to youth identity, but in all 40 interviews coming out was discussed as something done in youth. While this section pulls the research together through the three different themes, it is only after a lengthy discussion that one begins to see how younger LGBTQ Londoners' experiences of home work to queer heteronormativity. Through highlighting the ways identity plays out in relation to the coming-out process and migration away from the family home, I argue that this age cohort queers the notion of the heterosexual nuclear family home as a place that is anathema to LGBTQ identity. Despite many interviewees noting an evacuation from the family home to a home of one's own in adulthood, I argue this is not a unidirectional journey or a definitive departure; rather homemaking identity in early adulthood is shaped through the tension or push-and-pull of these two locations.

In the second section two additional themes are explored – understanding the current home as a temporary stepping-stone and renting in London – to uncover how the experiences and aspirations of home for research participants in this chapter support the larger thesis. Simply put, I use interview excerpts to show how ordinary everyday homemaking practices can be understood as queering heteronormativity. I argue that many of the interviewees do this in their physical homespace by aspiring to a notion of home that is much like the heteronormative home, which is a political act in and of itself. I observe that this subversive approach of the everyday marks a shift for queer politics.

Embodying LGBTQ youth identity: coming out, migration and nostalgia

The concept of embodiment frequently touched upon in feminist and queer literature is a key one that relates not only to my, at times, autobiographical and reflexive approach to this thesis, but also to my embodied situated-ness in the research data – indeed as researcher I appear in some of the below narratives. Moreover embodiment is an important concept for a chapter on younger narratives of home. Scholars across anthropology, architectural history, human geography and material culture have argued that home is as much a container of feeling as it is a physical place: “although it may possess the material characteristics of a built dwelling, [home] implies a space, a feeling, an idea, not necessarily located in a fixed space” (Briganti and Mezei 2012: 5). Such an understanding reinforces home as multidimensional and multi-spatial. Anthropologist Mary Douglas was perhaps one of the first to draw attention to this in her influential essay “The Idea of a Home: A Kind of Space” (1991): “Home is located in space, but it is not necessarily a fixed space” (Douglas 1991: 289 or Douglas 2012: 51; see also Mallett 2004). Blunt and Dowling also observe: “one of the defining features of home is that it is both material *and* imaginative, a site and a set of meanings/emotions” (2006: 22; emphasis in original). Understanding home in this way foregrounds corporeality, human agency and subjectivity – thus embodiment also relates to the discussion on Lefebvre, de Certeau and others in the introductory chapter which looked at the built environment as a social product of human interaction. And as an embodied social practice, home is shaped and reshaped by a constant performance “recreated through everyday practice” (Blunt and Dowling 2006: 22). In chapter two I noted that embodiment refers to the mutability of multiple subject positions across various space and time. An embodied framework allows for the argument that “home is conceived as

iterative, always in the making, unstable and endlessly deferred” (Waitt and Gorman-Murray 2011a: 1381; Fortier 2001; Probyn 1996). Thus through an embodiment lens heteronormative assumptions of the home as an *a priori* site of patriarchal nuclear family ideology can be denaturalised. In other words, embodiment can work to disrupt the stability of domesticity:

If homes and subjectivities are “works in progress”, then there are always possibilities to start remaking the social power relationships that sculpt and sustain a home... such possibilities may be particularly important for individuals who fall outside standard sexual narratives (Waitt and Gorman-Murray 2011a: 1386).

One of the advantages of Braidotti’s nomadic subjectivity theory, discussed earlier, is that it makes the case for fractured and multiple identities across time and space, none of which are more hierarchical than the other. Thus Braidotti (2011: 9) argues multiple belongings and subjectivities can work to break down knowledge categories. It is clear that the concepts of embodiment and nomadic subjectivity are closely related to mobility and movement across space – geographically, between locations and cultures, and temporally, at different phases of life. Conceptualising home through movement can be done in two ways: through the physical embodiment across many scales of the material – the dwelling, the city, the nation – as well as in the imaginative narrative. Thinking of this dual geographical aspect, embodiment offers a valuable framework for investigating experiences of migration and home. In what follows I draw on the interview data to look at mobility across two distinct but related spatial and temporal scales of home: the family home of one’s youth, which for many interviewees was located in a suburban or rural area, and the home established in adulthood in London.

Like studies of home, the turn to embodied performativities have affected migration studies. In his research on lesbian and gay migration in Australia, Gorman-Murray highlights the emotional dimension in the embodiment of migration for sexual minorities. Drawing attention to the recent geographical literature that investigates the emotional nature of embodiment, Gorman-Murray (2009: 443) concludes:

In this new work on emotional geographies, emotions, feelings and senses are posited as the connective tissue between the embodied self and place. Comfort, belonging, desire and fear felt in and through the body shape attachments to place...

Many participants’ explanations of the meaning of home align with emotional embodiment, which support the research that suggests home is a place saturated with

emotion (Shiach 2005: 257). In addition, through analysing the transcripts with an emotional embodiment lens the themes of migration and multiple spaces of home begin to unfold. When asked if he agreed with the idea that home, for some people, conjures up images of the suburban nuclear family with a father, mother and a couple of children, Edmund noted: “No I don’t agree with that... Home is just where you live on your own or with your partner. It’s not about children and a wife; it’s about where you put your emotionality... your emotional daily things” (interview 3 May 2011). Similarly, Julio felt that “home is a feeling, something you know inside” (participant writing diary). Jerry equally brought up emotional embodiment by remarking that home is a *feeling* of safety, relaxation and pride. The following quote by Jerry relates not only to emotional embodiment but touches on multiple physical spaces of home: “It’s a place I can feel safe in, relax in, rest in. It’s also somewhere I want to feel proud of. I also have the emotional connotations of my family home” (interview 25 January 2011). Alison offers a similar point of view, by referencing the feelings of comfort and relaxation:

I guess it’s the thing: *where am I comfortable?* And when I’m with [my girlfriend] it’s wherever we can be comfortable together. I guess if you go somewhere and you feel like you’re being watched the entire time that definitely won’t feel like home because you don’t feel like you can relax. Your home definitely has to be somewhere that you can relax.

In terms of emotional embodiment, Alison also speaks to the multiple spatial and temporal scales of home:

I think [home] means where I live and where I’m comfortable. But that doesn’t only apply to a physical home as in a house, but I’d always say an area or even a town. I’d still say I’m going ‘home’ when I’m going to see my parents even though they’ve moved so much. When people ask me where I’m from I say Dusseldorf but I’ve lived there not very long compared to other places where I have lived. But that’s because I like it there, I *feel* comfortable there and I *like* being there. I think home is several places. Definitely London is home as well because that’s where I live and I like being. I don’t think home is just one place (interview 20 January 2011).

Similarly, for 28 year-old Hungarian Seila, emotional embodiment is linked to her understanding of home. The interview with Seila was unique in that most of our conversation was about the previous home she shared with her now ex-girlfriend in Budapest, Hungary. Seila felt discussing the home she made with her ex-partner would make for a more interesting interview than the room she rents in south London; which is in itself curious *i.e.* for this interviewee one meaning of home implies property, decoration and a partner. As I go on to show, though, despite inhabiting a rented bedsit in London, Seila considers many spaces home. In light of

the multiplicity of home spaces, I asked Seila to expand on her definition of home. Her response aligns with emotional embodiment, through the use of words like warmth, feeling, safety, and security:

[Home is] where I am all the time; it's where I feel good. Here [in London] I like this house very much and feel good so this is home. I come home and I enjoy it and I feel safe and secure. Or, in Budapest when I lived with my ex-girlfriend that was home... I [also] consider my parents' house as home because that's where I grew up and it's the warmest and nicest.

Seila's response is interesting because, like a few interviewees' quotes above, it touches on embodied homemaking as closely related to migration: specifically the non-linear migration between the parental home and the home one establishes in adulthood. Our conversation continues:

Brent: Is your parents' house still very much home now?

Seila: Yes, I have a room there and I always have somewhere to go.

Brent: So if you're here and you're going to visit your family would you say "I'm going home"?

Seila: Yes I still do.

Brent: And when you're there and you are coming back here would you say "I'm going home to London"?

Seila: Yes. In Hungarian language it's very interesting because we have two words for home: one is *itt* the other is *otthon*. *Hon* means home but *itt* means here and *ott* means there, so *there* home and *here* home. If I'm in Hungary and I say I'm going home I go *there* home to London but I'm here now so this is *here* home.

Not only is movement related to Seila's current understanding of home – which is conveniently captured in Hungarian by the two words for home – but equally migration was connected to her coming-out experience:

I left [my small Hungarian town] when I was 18. I did my final exams of grammar school and then I applied for college in Budapest. And I moved to Budapest and I rented a flat with some friends and it was a party for four years... I went to all the gay bars and the whole world just opened up (interview 27 January 2011).

Seila's experience of migrating away from the family home as part of her coming-out process is not atypical and it points to the additional challenges of embodying home for sexual minorities. The family home is often a heterosexual domain and many LGBTQ people feel the need to migrate away from it, but this is not always a unidirectional journey: many interviewees, including Seila, still find home in both locations.

There has been substantial queer academic work on the declarative act of coming out, something that many LGBTQ people experience – often, but not exclusively, this is done in youth. Its definition encapsulates a challenge to

heteronormativity, the very reason this declaration must be made in the first place: “ ‘coming out’ ”, media studies researcher Sharif Mowlabocus (2010: 93) argues, “is about making one’s self, visible; throwing one’s queerness into relief against a heteronormative background that would otherwise render it invisible”. In *The Epistemology of the Closet* Sedgwick argues that coming out of the closet, which has been naturalised into the non-heterosexual experience, is “organised around a radical and irreducible incoherence. It holds the minoritizing view that there is a distinct population of persons who really are gay”. Sedgwick believes, rather than accept this is a normal fact of growing up or coming to terms with queer identity, we must look to interrogate the regimes of gender in order to eliminate inequality (Sedgwick 1990: 56; 59).

The ‘West’, in many instances, has seen a marked improvement in the rights of sexual minorities over the past half-century (Weeks 2007) – indeed, in the next chapter I trace some of the key changes that have shaped the earlier years of now older LGBTQ Londoners. Despite this fact, many people find dealing with their non-normative sexuality within the confines of the family home difficult. It is telling that not one of the 48 home owners/renters interviewed as part of this research project noted that they came out in a LGBTQ household. Therefore in light of these experiences it may not be a surprise that heterosexuality is naturalised in the family home and that coming out has become a standard challenge sexual minorities must navigate. In his coming-out story, research participant Jason sought to contest this: “my family’s experience was “why didn’t you tell us?”, but actually I thought “why should I be telling you, did you tell me about your sexuality?” ” (interview 8 January 2011).

For Karen and Gail, a lesbian couple in their early twenties, their coming-out narratives are each unique and their homemaking in a western London suburb, which continues to be affected by the coming-out process, shows the intimate link between domesticity and heteronormativity. In our interview Gail recalled telling her mum over the online chat service Microsoft Messenger (MSN) and noted: “I’ve never really discussed it with my dad but I think he knows”. When asked if she moved out as a result of that process she answered, “I thought by going to university I could explore/meet new people; so yeah”. Karen, did not move out as a result of coming out, rather she dealt with her sexuality in her early twenties. She recently ended a five and a half year relationship with a man and remarked that she has not “had the time to tell [her] mum and dad yet”. As a result of this new relationship, and her

friends and family knowing her as a straight woman, on occasion they have hidden their relationship within the home. A look at our conversation illuminates that for Karen, feelings of shame are attached to the act of mediating their relationship within the home:

Brent: When your families come to visit you do one of you sleep in the guest room?

Karen: Yeah, my mum hasn't actually been to our new house yet. But they know I live with Gail, but they just think we're good friends. But yeah, because we've got the two rooms, one of us will sleep up there.

Gail: Some of your friends who have come to stay don't know about us... Early on they didn't know so then I'd go into the attic room.

Brent: Karen, you're hanging your head in shame?

Karen: Yeah.

Gail: It was quite a new thing and we didn't want to jinx it, they would have been in shock.

Karen: They all know now. If my mum and dad were staying over (but they never would) we might still do that.

Brent: Would you take some things up so it looks like it's your room?

Gail: Maybe; we'd hide birthday cards and things.

Karen: I guess we would, but they just haven't been to the house yet. They live so far away. I don't really like the idea of doing it, but I also don't want to tell them; I'm not ready yet (interview 12 May 2011).

Not only is this narrative interesting because it shows how people assume domesticity to be a heterosexual domain, unless otherwise stated, the way Gail came out (over MSN) is equally poignant. Many young people find declaring their sexuality in the family home a very difficult act; new technological media that younger generations have grown up with, like instant messaging, offer a safer, spatially-removed alternative. Similarly, relying on MSN meant my own mother could deal with the news I had told her, and thus come to terms with her feelings and avoiding negative initial reactions. The telephone can be used in similar ways, and has been for decades, to avoid coming out in a face-to-face setting. For research participant Pierre, it meant he could be on a different continent thereby maximising geographical distance and making the experience less-difficult:

I didn't have the guts to tell my parents so I told them from Japan via phone. I think the distance thing made me feel safer... I was a bit fearful of my father, he accepted it... [but] my mother was disappointed (interview 2 February 2011).

Another interviewee who used the telephone was Sarah. She called her family back in Australia to tell them from London.

For many young people, like the experiences outlined above by Gail, Pierre and Seila, the formative years within the family home can be difficult, and therefore, for some, the migration away from the family home can be especially liberating. In her essay on queer diaspora, Fortier (2001) suggests that the experience of queer sexualities sees a diasporic departure away from the heterosexual family home and a subsequent migration synonymous with emancipation. Queer diasporas come together like other groups fleeing homeland, but as Fortier argues, the process challenges diasporas based on “ ‘nation’, ‘home’, ‘territory’, ‘community’ ”; difference and upbringing are no longer important: queer diasporas are built on notions of arrival rather than where one came from (Fortier 2002: 193). This experience, Sinfield argues (1999: 103), is echoed in many coming-out narratives in fictional literature:

Indeed, while ethnicity is transmitted usually through family and lineage, most of us are born and/or socialized into (presumably) heterosexual families. We have to move away from them, at least to some degree; and *into*, if we are lucky, the culture of a minority community. ‘Home is the place you get to, not the place you came from’, it says at the end of Paul Monette’s novel, *Half-way Home* [(Monette 1999)]. In fact, for lesbians and gay men the diasporic sense of separation and loss, so far from affording a principle of coherence for our subcultures, may actually attach to aspects of the (heterosexual) culture of our childhood, where we are no longer ‘at home’. Instead of dispersing, we assemble (emphasis in original).

Similarly, Brown (2000: 48) posits that coming out often necessitates leaving home and “mov[ing] to another place in order to know oneself as gay”.

The view that sees a migration away from the family home in order to come out in one’s youth is supported by 60 year old Eric: in Switzerland it “was a very conservative environment [and] it wouldn’t have been possible then. I had to move to London first... I left Switzerland when I was 23”. The following passage from our interview illuminates that, For Eric, like the experiences of many younger LGBTQ people, there was a need to migrate away from the home, to the freedom of the big city:

Coming to London was amazingly liberating in every possible respect, because: A, it was a very tolerant and outwardly looking society compared to the one I came from; B, it was a huge city, very anonymous; C, you could meet people everywhere, whereas the way I was brought up it was very difficult to meet people. Where did you meet people in Switzerland? Toilets. How disgraceful is that?! Whereas now it’s so completely different; young people are very fortunate that they don’t have the problems that we had (I’m not whingeing about it; it’s just a question of time)... (interview 4 February 2011).

I have included this long passage for three reasons: it shows why Eric needed to move; it offers a snapshot of how difficult it was for sexual minorities to meet like-minded people in the past (I develop the historical implications of growing up in a much more oppressive time in the next chapter); and it relates back to the discussion of gay shame, where shame can, for some, play a defining role in the coming-out process.

Although society has changed and in many ways it is easier now, migration continues to be linked to coming-out experiences. For Scott, migration away from the family home was connected to his coming out, he notes:

[I moved out] shortly after my coming out. I think it was because of that. I had just finished my A levels then I came out. At that point we had to do civil service (or the army)... I chose to work in a private clinic for people with HIV/AIDS for eighteen months. I tried to find a place that was as far away from my parents as possible, and that was in Munich, which was 800 kilometres away. That was an incredibly big step for me.

Equally, for research participant Jerry, his queer sexuality played a role in his migration away from the family home. Sharing his coming-out story, Jerry notes:

My parents found my gay lifestyle magazines under my bed and they were furious and shocked and very upset. So that all happened in my family home. ... I went to boarding school soon after, [which was] my choice; they didn't want me to go... I was sixteen; I went to this weird international school. And after that I never really went back for longer than a week or two.

For Jerry, the migration connected to his coming out was “hugely important” to the happiness and success of his adult life. On more than one occasion he expressed how important boarding school was and he even suggests his “old boarding school feels homey”. Jerry explains:

I had visited a similar school in Norway on a choir tour and I met a gay student there and he was like, “these schools are around the world you should apply and they're very liberal, you're gay and you'll settle in fine”... I met amazing people there and just flourished. Until I went to that school I didn't know who I was or what I was good at. I didn't know that I was good at making friends... I didn't have much confidence. I didn't know why I wasn't like the straight boys and why I hated rugby... And then I went to this school and they were like “everyone is cool!”. I wouldn't be where I am today (which is very happy and pleased with my lifestyle)... I felt very calmed and welcomed at this school and did very well on my exams and now I'm very happy... It was almost elation for two years: it was a completely magical experience (interview 25 January 2011).

And along similar lines, interviewee Rachel recalls her temporary migration during university to summer camps in the United States. She remarks that “it was a really

big thing” that played an important role in shaping her identity as a lesbian and now she thinks of that place as home:

I came out when I was sixteen but my first summer working at camp was the first time I had been around a lot of lesbians simultaneously. In terms of finding myself (if you want to go down that route) that was very good. That was the first time I had ever experienced a gay community, I guess. I had gone out there expecting it to be really homophobic, because that was the preconception that I had of mid-west America and actually the camp director was lesbian, the deputy camp director was lesbian, my cabin mate was lesbian. So that was definitely a big one that feels like home (interview 24 January 2011).

As these interviews show, migration can be important for establishing identity, memories and meanings of home for some younger non-heterosexuals – but I concede that a wider research sample would be needed to offer generalisations. Indeed migration is not necessary for all people, particularly those who come out in a safe environment.

If the family home has no room for non-normative sexuality this can be traumatic and make migration even more necessary. In their study looking at the coming-out narratives of three young gay men in a Northern English town, geographers Tracey Skelton and Valentine (2005) show the difficulty that ensues when one has to come to terms with this aspect of identity in an intolerant home. The direct link between patriarchal heterosexual masculinity and homophobia can make it especially traumatic for young gay people, with many choosing to leave home. Participants from my own research support the notion that coming out in an intolerant home can be traumatic. For Dean, who came out in the 1960s when he was a teenager, his narrative is telling in that not only was it traumatic, but his sexuality was literally dealt with outside of the home, thus complicating the unidirectional migration model:

I did [come out within the family home], yes. It's one of the great stories! The phrase 'come out' always conjures up the image of you standing there saying "hello mum and dad, I'm gay". That's not how they found out. They found out by default... This man and I got it on... And we had this wild affair. I was fifteen at the time. I still remember it to this day: unbelievable. And he wrote me a letter, which he gave to me... telling me how much he adored me... I read it and tore it up because my parents didn't know I was gay. I thought "I better not put it in the waste paper basket I'll put it in the bin outside". And then my sister as it happened lost some jewellery and my mother went and looked in the bin outside and found the letter. And she pieced it back together. And then my parents... both asked to see me. And what could I say? And thereby hangs the rest of my life. They never shouted at me. They clearly couldn't cope with it. Their solution was for me to go see a psychiatrist so I went to the Tavistock Clinic in Hampstead which is

very well known and was under psychotherapy for nearly a year; which probably did me more damage than good. They didn't throw me out. And I didn't leave because of it. Because it was being dealt with outside it *was* being dealt with (interview 18 February 2011).

Although for some people migrating away from the home is an important step, despite going through a traumatic experience, Dean did not initially move out. Rather after a two year period he left to be with his boyfriend, who was not welcomed in his family home.

While migration is linked to the coming-out process for some people, whether after declaring oneself or later on, some people chose to go back to the family home as an adult and tell family members; Edmund is one interviewee that went through this. He remembers that it was a hard thing to do: "It was difficult because... my country [(Colombia)] is very traditional and conservative... so in the context of being gay it's quite complicated; it's not a nice thing to say" (interview 3 May 2011). Hugo has not declared his sexuality to his parents but is prepared to tell them when they ask:

It's a bit of a weird situation because they know; I know they know! They never ask me "when are you going to get married?" or "oh look at that girl". They never touch these subjects. I've thought about it before, as soon as I started living my gay life I thought "I don't want to lie"... I think they never wanted me to come out and touch the subject, so they never asked me. The minute they ask I will tell them.

Hugo noted that he migrated away from his family home in a small town to go to college in large regional city at the age of sixteen, and although this was more of a pragmatic reason, "subconsciously" he moved far away because of his sexuality. And now that he has moved to London and his family remains in South America, he acknowledges that the geographical distance has expanded as he became more accepting of his own sexuality (interview 12 April 2011). Sally also moved from Colombia, to London. She moved out of the family home to go to university and gain independence and then "realised [she] was a lesbian" so she eventually went back home for a visit to tell her parents. Like those discussed above, Sally also defines home in multiple geographical spaces: "[home is] the country of Colombia, and my house in Colombia, and my family's place in Colombia... as well as this place [in London]" (interview 4 April 2011).

For sexual minorities that have not yet come out and are still living with their family, and indeed for those that do not have a positive experience within the parental home, migrating even temporarily into safe zones is an important part of

identity formation. Jack's story illuminates how temporarily leaving the home in one's youth relates to a sense of homemaking beyond the physical boundaries of the family house:

If I go to a gay bar or anywhere that's gay [that space] feels like home because when I was younger and I hadn't come out I felt safe there. I couldn't tell my parents when I was still living at home. So it still feels comfortable.

Agreeing with Jack, his husband Gary also spoke about finding home in a gay bar:

There was a club in London called G-A-Y Astoria, which has since been demolished, and I used to be there four nights a week from the age of fourteen to 24... And that really did feel like home. When they demolished it I got quite upset about it. I didn't realise I had formed such a sense of belonging to that building where complex memories and so much happened. It was a really important place to me (interview 16 January 2011).

Feeling at home in a bar was also brought up by Kylie, but she notes the type of bar is important:

Somewhere that has felt like home is actually, for me, walking into somewhere like First Out [a former gay bar/café in central London]. When I was first coming out, walking into a gay bar [made me think] "I feel at home"... Being surrounded by gay or lesbian or transgendered people you get a feeling. For me it's quite a nice feeling. That's why I like going to First Out. It's the ambience as well. It's quite chilled. It's not alternative but it's just a feeling that you get there... I feel really comfortable in this environment. It's about that relaxed atmosphere, because I have felt uncomfortable going into some gay bars where you just think "this is pretentious and no one is talking to each other" (interview 24 February 2011).

For some people the coming-out experience is more positive than the above examples and migration away from the family home is not necessary. With so much scholarly literature, as well as fiction, focusing on the more interesting traumatic stories, more work is needed that repositions the coming-out narrative within affirmative family homes (I discuss this body of literature below when I link LGBTQ youth migration, coming-out experiences and homemaking through the concept of productive nostalgia). Julio, who moved out of the family home in New York City to be with his boyfriend in London, can speak to an affirmative coming-out experience:

[The experience] was fine. My dad died when I was nine so it was really just my mum. My mum was incredibly liberal. [It was] never an issue. None of my family have ever had an issue and have always been very supportive and have accepted all of my partners into the family (interview 16 February 2011).

Gary is another interviewee that shared a positive coming-out narrative, and as a result the family home still feels like home to him: "My parents' home still feels like

home because it's the same house they've lived in since I was born and I came out in that home" (interview 16 January 2011). Additionally, a handful of other participants recalled positive experiences by using brief words and sentences similar to that expressed in the following quote from interviewee Bradley: "It was absolutely fine; I've had no coming-out trauma from my family" (interview 11 June 2011).

Regardless of whether one needs to migrate away in order to come out, home is frequently defined as both the family home and the home established in adulthood. For 23 year old German Eva, her coming out was not traumatic but not welcomed either: her mom "took it as a joke and ignored it and since then [they have] never talked about it". Eva notes a connection between freedom, migration and coming to London:

Brent: Do you think moving to London for university was a liberating experience?

Eva: Yes, it was a lot easier. Especially because the area where our house [in Germany] is located is quite upper class, but also very conservative and people drive around with their fancy cars and they don't have much space for open-mindedness for people that are different. So I feel a lot freer in anything I do here.

Brent: And did you decide to come to study in London because it is far from your parents?

Eva: Yes, definitely!

Regardless of her migration away from the family home to London, Eva calls both her parents' residences in Germany and Turkey home, as well as her flat in east London (interview 7 February 2011).²⁵

Returning to look at Jerry's migration away from the family home offers a further layer of complexity in relation to defining home in both locations. Although Jerry left the family home as part of his coming out, like Eva, his homemaking identity is shaped by dual locations: the home he has set up for himself in south London as well as the parental home in Cardiff:

If I'm there for Christmas and I say "I'm going to go home now" they say "no that's London, your home is here". They are right, the place where I'm safest and actually most loved is my family home in Cardiff where every

²⁵ Home can be defined in various geographical terms. Although beyond the scope of this thesis, I want to dwell briefly on Eva's notion of home in east London. Eva comments east London can be an accepting, diverse and queer place:

I feel at home in east London... I would never move anywhere else in London... It's so gay and open and diverse, I really feel like I don't have to hide anything here. When I'm at uni [in Bloomsbury, central London] and everyone is around me is straight it makes me feel uncomfortable and not at home.

Brown (2007b) and Andersson (2008; 2009) are two scholars that offer recent studies of east London's queer scene, although not in terms of 'home'. Many other interviewees, such as Scott and Corby believed home to be spatially broad to include other gay-friendly cities around the world, such as, for them, Madrid (interview 30 March 2011).

single member of my family live. ... When I do go there I'm provided for. That *is* my home. But obviously my day to day home is here [in London].

Jerry's understanding of home is defined by a tension between both his parental home – where “his sexuality is a problem” because they do not talk about it – and his home in London:

When I go home I get really bad anxiety, so much so that the main way of coping with my parents is to spend most of the time drunk... After about four days I start to think: “I need to get out of here and get back to my life”.

Feelings of anxiety, in this context, can be understood as an emotional link between the embodied self and place of home for Jerry. As this example has shown, despite a difficult coming-out experience and subsequent migration, Jerry's homemaking is constructed through his physical and emotional embodiment in both locations: his parental home “where [he's] safest and actually most loved”, and in the home in London where he lives his day-to-day life (interview 25 January 2011).

Therefore, in light of this relationship with the family home, I suggest that Jerry's homemaking practice draws parallels with, what Blunt terms ‘productive nostalgia’, whereby the negative connotations typical to nostalgic desire are challenged. I now turn to this theoretical framework, outline Blunt's use of the term and then show how this concept might challenge the trajectory implied by the majority of coming-out narratives that LGBTQ people coming to terms with their sexuality in their youth must make a unidirectional migration away from the family home. I draw from Blunt's work to push for a more productive framing of the relationship between migration, coming out, and early homemaking.

Nostalgia is a concept that readily extends from the prior discussion on embodying home, which began this section. As an embodied emotion related to the themes of migration and movement, nostalgia points to how attachment to place is constructed through journeys between multiple homes. Eva is one interviewee that noted her room is her home because she is “quite a nostalgic person”; the childhood objects in it came with her when she moved away from her family home in Germany. Others also noted material possessions from their childhood, including Rachel who has very few objects in her home but one is “a little teddy bear that [her] parents bought [her] when [she] was born” (interview 24 January 2011).

In her studies of diaspora and Anglo-Indian homemaking in McCluskieganj during the 50 years before and after Indian Independence (Blunt 2003a; Blunt 2005; Blunt and Dowling 2006: 212–213), Blunt presents productive nostalgia as a rethinking of nostalgic desire, which at its roots contains a suppressive and confining

etymology: “the term ‘nostalgia’ is derived from the Greek *nostos* for return home, and *algos* for pain, and implies homesickness and a yearning for home” (Blunt 2005: 13; Chambers 1990). To have nostalgic feelings “implies a longing for an imagined and unattainable past”; thus nostalgia further aligns with the thread of emotional embodiment, specifically by acting as an emotion that links the self to the place of home. In her explanation of nostalgia Blunt suggests that as a concept it suppresses home “whereby spaces of home are located in the past rather than the present, in imaginative rather than material terms”. Blunt seeks to challenge this antipathy by “refocusing on nostalgia as the desire for home... [by] explore[ing] its liberatory potential” for Anglo-Indians’ present homemaking and their idealisation of a future (Blunt 2005: 14). In other words, productive nostalgia repositions nostalgic ideals from the past imaginary (that most often repress home) to the embodiment of lived experiences in the present as well as the future, which can liberate memories of home. Like productive nostalgia, “rather than signal loss, mourning and the impossibility of return”, I suggest the “mobilization of the past in relation to the present and future” is a more positive framing of homemaking for not just Anglo-Indian diasporas, but also marginalised sexualities. This aim seeks to challenge the notion that the family home is, as Sinfield suggests, “the site of impossible return” because the childhoods of sexual minorities are “cut off from the heterosexual culture” (cited in Fortier 2001: 409). While Probyn (1996: 114) suggests, “you can never go home” because “once returned, you realize the cliché that home is never what it was”, I argue that this is not entirely true. Despite coming-out experiences and frequently a migration away from the family home, meanings of home for many LGBTQ Londoners challenge the notion of a unidirectional journey linked to narratives of coming out: the conversations with interviewees show that home is imagined in both places.

Seeing queer migration in a productive light relates to the work of some scholars who show positive coming-out experiences within the family home (e.g. Gorman-Murray 2008b) and also to others who have sought to reposition the suburban and rural as a space of affirmation. The family home is often associated with suburbia or rural zones and coming-out narratives in literature often offer a swift rejection in favour of the liberating anonymity of the metropolis. Despite many of the younger interviewees offering similar narratives, this was not a uniform view. Waitt and Gorman-Murray (2011a: 1380) argue, repositioning affirmative coming-out narratives within suburban family homes will “critique essentialist categories that

posit the migration of non-normative sexualities as unidirectional flow from small rural towns to large urban centres”. By focusing on the non-urban LGBTQ narrative, this body of work seeks to challenge the binary of the “rural closet and (metropolitan) gay ghetto” (Waitt and Gorman-Murray 2011b: 2). The work of Dines is relevant on this point because, by focusing on fictional literature in which protagonists come out in suburbia, he seeks to challenge the concept that suburbia must be “swiftly abandoned and hated”. Dines refers to the fictional novel *Tim and Pete* (Baker 1993), by American author James Robert Baker, to argue that suburbia can be an affirmative place for queer people:

Tim and Pete demonstrates both an awareness of the ways in which visions of suburbia can draw gay men into nostalgic impotence, and of the limitations of attempts to subvert familial domesticity. The novel suggest that a better way of interacting with the straightest space imaginable is to broaden and strengthen gay subcultures by drawing on specifically the numerous and diverse gay experiences, histories, and readings of suburbia (Dines 2005: 191).

Dines’s argument coincides with the concept of productive nostalgia: “*Tim and Pete* (1993) instead suggests an alternative, more productive response to suburbia: the recovery and recuperation of specifically gay imaginary investments in the suburbs” (Dines 2005: 176). Two interviewees, a couple in south London, offer an enactment of productive nostalgia in the physical embodiment of homemaking through a dialogue between the past parental home, the physical present home and even the imaginary future home – themes that Blunt puts forward in her definition of the concept.

In the interview with married couple Jack and Gary negative nostalgic notions of home were challenged. Discussing his aspirations of home, Jack notes:

My parents’ house was a mishmash of every style you can imagine, which was awful. It was a three bedroom terraced house with a garden and a dog, which is kind of what I want now (but without the bad taste). What we both want is what we had growing up.

Thus within the same breath this interviewee links nostalgic memories of the family home with his (and his partner’s) ideal dream home – albeit one decorated in better taste. During the interview Jack informed me that they were house hunting so they could move out of the city to have more land and a better lifestyle. Their perfect home would have enough bedrooms “so that [they] can accommodate [Jack’s] mum so she could have her own living space and even her own bathroom”. Further, they wanted to move out of the city to be able to have a garden (yard):

We'd use it for socialising. Something that we can't do now is have a BBQ and have people around for that or fireworks – especially because a lot of our friends have kids. It just makes it far more social. A lot of our friends moved out of London for that reason. Plus we're going to have pets as well – at least two dogs... We've both grown up with animals around the house; I think it makes the home. A garden is what we miss. We've always had gardens growing up (interview 16 January 2011).

While this was expressed as a dream for the future, it has subsequently become a reality as they were able to purchase a property in a rural area (email correspondence 4 August 2011). For Jack and Gary, the productive nostalgic desire to create a home similar to their family homes was first expressed in the imagination/future idealisation but has since become a reality in their physical embodiment of a new family home outside of London – not only is this closer to the model of home each partner had in childhood, it is also complete with Jack's mother's physical presence. For Gary, this desire to have a home of his own similar to his parental home may come from the fact that his coming-out story was not traumatic. He explains: "I came out at a very young age and was allowed to be who I wanted when I was living at my parents' house" (interview 16 January 2011).

The excerpts from interview transcripts drawn on in this section show that parallels can be drawn with Blunt's productive nostalgia framework. This half of the chapter has shown that a push-and-pull relationship exists between the parental home and the home one establishes in adulthood, wherein meanings of home for many interviewees continue to be defined by both spaces, despite coming-out experiences. Having set the stage by highlighting the concepts of embodiment, coming out, migration between the family home and adult home, as well as the framework of productive nostalgia, I now turn to the second section which moves to look at additional themes that developed out of the interviews with LGBTQ Londoners in their twenties and thirties; in doing so I support the argument that this age cohort's homemaking practices queer heteronormativity.

LGBTQ youth queering heteronormativity: temporality and renting in London

In this section I draw on the interview transcripts and in a few instances the participant writing diaries to reveal a few additionally important themes relating to younger LGBTQ Londoners' experiences of home: temporality as intimately tied to homemaking and renting in London. I explore how these themes relate to setting up a home in early adulthood and I seek to show how this younger demographic is challenging heteronormativity through their everyday homemaking practices. I argue

that many of these interviewees do this by aspiring to a notion of home that is not radically subversive, but rather similar to the socially imagined understanding of home. In chapter two I showed how a gay domestic aesthetic as it currently exists in architectural history and other spatial disciplines would lead one to believe that sexual minorities live in, and long for, high design, modernist and extraordinary domestic spaces; as this section shows, though, for the younger LGBTQ Londoners that took part in this research, this is mostly not the case. I begin this section by considering the theme of rented accommodation in London.

It may come as hardly a surprise that in a metropolis the size of London young people, often in their studies or shortly after at the start of their careers, are limited financially and rent accommodation – which is sometimes less than ideal. LGBTQ people are no exception to this. As I have shown in the previous section, for many, the process of coming out can make having a room of one's own that much more important. In this section I want to examine the ways in which LGBTQ people understand this period of life as a temporary stepping-stone for where they hope to go in the future, and how this can queer the heteronormative home.

Several research participants expressed the view that renting accommodation hindered their homemaking and as a result reinforced the temporality of the space. Financially limited student Simon, for instance, noted objects in his home consist of many found objects and “ ‘fifth-hand’ furniture”. Simon observed that in the future when he has more income he will put more effort into making his own home with his partner (participant writing diary). Renting accommodation with people that one does not get along with can equally hinder setting down roots. Betty has something to say about this:

Home is not where I live now, [*i.e.*] sharing a house with strangers, especially if we don't get along. So my bedroom is my only personal environment but very constricted. Personal objects make it more bearable but I don't treat it as 'home' (participant writing diary).

Karen also spoke to the problem of renting by noting, “Because it's rented we're limited in what we can do, but we've definitely put our mark on the house”, and her girlfriend, Gail, added: “yeah, we put up our pictures and posters”. Even though this couple was renting, they took inspiration from the colour of their house to repaint a bench in their garden to match the front of the house. When asked what they would do if they owned the flat, they expressed the wish to redo several things, including repainting rooms and getting new furniture that matched (interview 12 May 2011). Similarly, Julio has painted but has not done much more because he rents and

considers the space a temporary living situation: “If I owned”, he notes “I would gut the place; I would never put more than necessary at the moment” (interview 16 February 2011). Eva also spoke to temporality involved in renting a flat in one’s youth: “I love painting, but not here... I don’t think I’m allowed to. If my landlord would pay for everything I would definitely paint it”. When asked if she thought there might be a theme to her flat Eva remarked that “it’s quite young. I’m a student so it’s not a grown up flat”. This quote suggests that young people can see the home as temporary, until one ‘grows up’.

Moving briefly from the theme of temporality, Eva offers a valuable example showing the diversity of the queer home and community. At the start of our interview Eva self-selected queer as the best way to describe her sexual orientation: “when I hear lesbian I don’t really think of me... I feel more gender queer” (interview 7 February 2011). She noted objects like the rainbow flag and “girly clothes” – objects that she felt more closely identify with mainstream lesbian culture or heterosexuality – are avoided at all costs. Unlike some of the more recognisable queer homemaking characteristics mentioned elsewhere in this chapter and thesis, this interviewee focused on the affect of androgyny to describe her particular embodiment of queer identity and the way it plays out at home: “In some ways if you look around it’s kind of androgynous: we’re not that girly so we don’t have anything pink or butterflies” (Figure 3.1). Further, her favourite book, *Orlando* (Woolf 2006 [1928]), also explores this as its main theme (interview 7 February 2011).



Figure 3.1 – A view of Eva’s bedroom which she suggests is ‘androgynous’ in style.

In line with her desire to identify in ways counter to both mainstream gay culture and heterosexuality, her much-valued music collection – which includes alternative queer bands like “Riot Girl” and “Antony and the Johnsons ([which is] is transvestite music)” – also reflects her queer subjectivity (Figure 3.2).



Figure 3.2 – A close-up image showing Eva's queer record collection.

Read together, the two images Eva supplied begin to show how her androgynous homemaking and queer record collection are a result of challenges to mainstream straight and LGBTQ culture: homemaking choices, like identity subjectivity are incredibly diverse, which further shows the limitations and trouble with applying a monolithic representation of space and domesticity linked to minority sexuality (as discussed in chapter two). While heteronormativity might encourage more gender appropriate decor in line with a heterosexual matrix (Rich 1993 [1980]; Butler 1990a) where one's female femininity is literally displayed on the walls and is apparent in objects that fill a home, and LGBTQ stereotypes in architectural studies and beyond might expect a certain type of domestic space, not all people abide in the making of a home.

Returning to the theme of temporality in the young person's home, Alison expressed mixed feelings about the community that exists in her street in south London. Describing a social networking site designed for the purposes of meeting local neighbours and establishing a sense of community, she notes it has made her and her flatmates aware of their living situation and what is expected of them:

My flatmates and I were joking that we haven't [joined the website] and I bet the whole road has and they are all gossiping about us: [said in an aged, female voice] "they're in their late twenties and thirties and they're still sharing a house; they always bring home different people"... [The

community collective is] quite nice to see... [but] it's a bit 'grown up' (interview 20 January 2011).

Through this comment Alison implies that their neighbours might expect them to eventually 'settle down' and move from the home. Speaking about his rented room in a house that he shares with his landlady, Parker comments on the temporality of not just home but also London: "My home is my bedroom, my space... London is currently my home, but it's temporary" (interview 2 February 2011). Parker felt home has more to do with the physicality of having a roof over his head, especially considering his family home back in Belgium was sold after his parents died and he has moved around several countries on two different continents. He also noted that because he is not committed to London or Great Britain, he will one day move to another country:

When someone asks me where I'd like to live and settle down, I don't think of London or Britain but rather of Germany, the culture I feel most affinity for... If London is at present my 'home', I sense that it won't be forever. I'm not in a relationship – and I don't foresee to be in one in the near future – so I'm in theory at least free to come and go as I please; I don't have any commitments to my partners and/or my children (participant writing diary).

Janice and Sarah also build on the link between temporality, homemaking in youth and the lack of rootedness that Parker brought up. Although they represent one of the few interviews with younger home owners, they equally understand it in temporary terms. Janice expressed her desire to move back to her native country:

We're definitely not permanent here. I think within five to ten years we might go to Australia. We'll never live in the suburbs, we're definitely agreed on that. We'll either be in central London or somewhere else in the world. So there's an element of not putting too many roots down because we might go.

When I asked the couple what home meant to them, they both struggled with the question because of the temporality that has always been tied to their understanding of home:

Janice: I think we both aren't particularly great home builders. It's always in the back of my head that we'll move somewhere else so [we are not] putting roots down.

Sarah: There are all these things that we should do, and then you're like, "no *no*, hang on let's not do anything apart from things that will add value in the time that we think we will be here". We're talking about potentially moving back to Australia before [our son] is at school. So everything we do is a bit time limited (interview 17 February 2011).

Another lesbian couple, Kylie and Kiera, who are both in their early thirties, also coincidentally plan to move back to Australia. The women came to London together on a working holiday over six years ago and ended up staying, at least for

the time being. Kylie notes: “Well, the ultimate plan is to relocate back to Australia... But currently we’re just quite happy here. London feels right for us at the moment”. Although one of the women owned a house back in Australia and enjoyed renovating it, they expressed a desire to make a lot of changes to the flat but were hindered by renting: “we both really want to go home and buy a house and do it up”. The only thing they have done in their London rented home was install insulation in the roof space, after getting the landlord to pay for it. After a period of living in rented accommodation here they decided to ship over furniture, even though they do not plan to settle here:

Kylie: Because we had been in furnished apartments and stuff, you break something and think “oh I need this” and you think “well we’ve actually got this sitting in storage”. We originally planned to come over for two years but between us we had two houses worth [of material possessions and furniture]...

Kiera: Some of the rental furniture is horrible and uncomfortable. We’ve got the stuff sitting in storage and if we stay here another five years it’ll have been sitting in storage for eight years; we’re probably going to open up the storage shed and go, “that’s so out of date, mouldy and musty and everything else”. So we just thought it was easier. And the cost of furniture in the UK is really *really* expensive, so we just thought we would put it in a container and ship it over.

Brent: Would you then ship it back when you go back home?

Kiera: Some of it we would, yeah; like the dining table... We’ll look at wear and tear on stuff and make a decision (Figure 3.3).



Figure 3.3 – Kylie’s and Kiera’s dining table, one of the pieces of furniture that they shipped over from Australia despite (and because of) renting in London.

During the course of the interview Kiera excitedly told me that she was expecting their first child, which has made them think more about the temporality of their home here in London and the imminent move back to Australia:

I think [this flat] will support one child until about one year old. And then there won’t be enough space. This area down here with a few toys around it will probably drive me nuts! The plan is to move back to Australia before the children start school.

Kiera’s justification for bringing over the furniture to temporarily set up home in London is interesting because it speaks to the notion that the rental market has an effect on what one is willing to put up with:

The quality of housing is also different over here. People put up with a lot. In Australia you wouldn’t put up with a tiny bar fridge in your apartment. No storage space... What we pay for rent here, for a tiny place!... Some of the places we’ve rented have had bathrooms falling down. And damp. The landlords don’t care. In Australia you wouldn’t rent it (interview 24 February 2011).

In the writing diary I asked each participant to describe the feelings that one’s home evokes. Anger towards renting was Kiera’s first remark:

Renting makes me angry about my home. I find landlords frustrating and I often see things that could be improved at very little cost but would make the house so much more comfortable or environmentally friendly. Like loft insulation, a reliable boiler, double glazing, a decent coat of paint. Our current place has very little storage space, and a bar fridge which can be annoying (participant writing diary).

Eva was another participant that had something to say about renting in London:

Here we constantly have to fight against mould and water coming in because it's the top floor flat and it's a shitty old building. We get lots of mould in the bathroom and I had it in my room... This window is like plastic! It does make a difference, especially in the bathroom because the toilet flush keeps breaking and the plumber comes and two weeks later it happens again (interview 7 February 2011).

Along with showing the temporality tied to renting, these quotes show that the condition of flats in London can play a role in the homemaking experience. I now turn to show the explicit ways – despite the challenges faced through renting – that young LGBTQ Londoners are queering heteronormativity at home.

There are many ways that heteronormativity can be challenged through homemaking, and, as the following examples show, a variety of methods are taken up by young LGBTQ Londoners. When it comes to setting up a permanent home in the future, many participants spoke of the desire to have something not far off from the notion of home put forward in the societal imaginary. I asked every participant how they thought their home fits into the ideal of home as the suburban, nuclear family with a father, mother and a couple of children, and although many people challenged the statement, the responses I received were surprising. Eva exclaimed that her home does not fit into this picture at all, because she lives in an inner-city area with a flatmate; however,

It sounds nice though; it's something that I try and work towards. I want to have kids and a dog, and a garden and that sort of thing... I wouldn't necessarily choose suburbia but I think I might be forced to because London is just too expensive (interview 7 February 2011).

Although Seila temporarily rents a room in a house in south London, she also spoke about her dream of finding a near equivalent to the model:

I would like to have a nice family house with my partner (I think a woman) and children... I would love to have a family house somewhere close to a big city or in a big city, with a big garden... (interview 27 January 2011).

Another research participant who felt he does not fit into the image right now is Hugo: “Two gay guys living together in the city, in a block of flats? I don't think it fits”. But like Eva and Seila, Hugo noted that he hopes to have a partner with kids and even live in the suburbs, but he “doesn't know if it will happen though” (interview 12 April 2011). Alison felt that a lot of people along her street fit into the normative ideology of home, which she hinted at when she expressed that her neighbours probably gossip about her shared rented house. She continues: “at this point in time I don't really fit into it, but I don't particularly mind. But I wouldn't

rule out that I'm not going to live in a house with 2.5 children; just not with a husband!" (interview 20 January 2011). Kylie and Kiera, who are nearing the end of their sojourn in London, also have plans to embrace the ideal of home in the near future:

Brent: How do you think your home fits into this picture?

Kylie: Not far off! [Laughter]

Kiera: Besides the fact that it's a woman and a woman I think we want the nice house and the 2.5 children and the white picket fence in suburbia. We don't have any ambitions to live in a caravan or a tent or some ultra-modern loft.

Kylie: I think because of our backgrounds, in terms of our plan for children we want outdoor space... And to not be cooped up in a small apartment, where the only outdoor time you get is to be taken down to a park or a common (interview 24 February 2011).

In her writing diary, Kiera expanded on how they will fit in, but equally noted how they will be a different version of the family home:

We live in the suburbs, we want the white picket fence, the nice furnishings, the two children and to be part of our local community. In other aspects we are completely different. Firstly we are a same-sex couple. We are both equal in our relationship. It does not matter which of us are bringing in more income, we share it equally [*sic*]. We both earn good incomes so no one in particular is the "bread winner". All house-hold chores, cooking, cleaning ironing *etc.* are shared. We plan on sharing the responsibility of our baby, with us both taking time off work in the first year to take care of it (participant writing diary).

Through narrating her coming-out story Kiera commented that her parents were disappointed not in her, but in the unfortunate situation that her lesbian identity would mean for reaching the benchmark of success, the house, the kids and, as a result, happiness:

They had this picture of me getting married and having the 2.5 children and the white picket fence and thought that [I was] throwing all that away with this lifestyle choice. And then after a while they realised: well actually no, you can achieve everything and be happy at the same time with the partner that you choose (interview 24 February 2011).

While some young people made comments about hopefully one day fitting into a version of home not far off that of the heteronormative home, a few participants felt they already do fit in to something like that – Rachel is one of them. Rachel explains how she enjoys baking and domestic activities and that this is actually challenging the dated and problematic stereotype of a young lesbian woman as someone who rejects typical gendered roles:

I think my home *does* fit into that, in a way, because I probably do a lot of the activities that your typical suburban mother would do in her home... I do feel like it's a little bit subversive, but I like being different. Before [my

girlfriend] and I got together I was dead set against cohabitation partly because I just felt it was what is expected and partly because it's really important to me to just be able to be myself at home. But I think maybe that's just because I hadn't met someone that had similar enough ideals (interview 24 January 2011).

Caleb believed that *home* is personal and subjective, it “doesn't have to be the two point four”, but like Rachel, his current home works towards a similar model. He currently lives in a rented flat with his long-term partner, which is something unusual among his early-twenties peer group (interview 6 January 2011). For Sharon, a transgender 32 year old woman who lives with her partner just outside of London – in what she calls suburbia – she suggests their home fits into the model because of love in the home:

Well we are our own family as it were: no kids, but there's two of us. We've got love; we've got each other, and we've got someone to support the other when things go wrong. Love is more important than anything else (interview 10 May 2011).

Sarah and Janice believed that their home fits to this model: “we've kind of gone down that route: we have us and a baby and all the trappings that come with that [*sic*] – a home in the equivalent of suburbia in London” (interview 17 February 2011).

Derrick felt that the home he shares with his boyfriend fits into this mould too: “Well, we live in a London suburb. [Our home] probably [fits] pretty well. We're just a couple. We've not got kids yet; but yeah, I think we're fairly 'normal' ” (interview 6 January 2011). It is interesting that Derrick raised the term ‘normal’ when discussing his home. As discussed in depth in chapter two, the use of the term by a gay man when referring to his home offers a further queering of Warner's *The Trouble with Normal* (1999). Specifically, contrary to Warner's argument that normalising gay identity – which he sees as akin to assimilating into heterosexual values – is bad for the larger cause of gay rights, Derrick seeks to make his home just like any other domestic space.

If the above excerpts can be understood through the lens of LGBTQ Londoners fitting into in some ways the ideological mould of home, then the following ones can be read as embodying a variation of the societal imaginary. At first Maurice suggested he does not fit into that ideal because his home has “two guys living together with a cat”. But with plans to begin the adoption process Maurice felt that he and his partner will become “a slightly different version of the 1950s domestic arrangement” (interview 1 April 2011). Although Scott and Corby, a couple in their late thirties, suggest that their loft flat in south London does not fit

into that ideal, they do think that home is about family; for them, “in a way” when “all [their] friends are over then it becomes more like a typical family home”. Scott continues by reminiscing about the previous Christmas: “all the families that were stranded here or didn’t have anywhere else to go [came over]... that’s home to us; it was beautiful” (interview 30 March 2011). Jerry’s view of the rented flat he shares with his lesbian flatmate and how it fits into the mould is quite similar to the comments made by Maurice, Scott and Corby. He observes:

We’re like a weird urban family. We support each other not in a coupley [*sic*] way – but elements of that. We have our friends who are important to us in various ways; we have Christmas dinner for us and our friends (interview 25 January 2011).

So far I have shown the ways in which younger participants’ idealisation and physical home environment can queer heteronormativity, by aspiring to a modified version of an ideological home. A small number of interviewees contrast this by suggesting their home rejects ideological understandings of home, which equally offer challenges to heteronormativity. On the one hand Parker understands his home as temporary like those discussed above, but on the other he challenges the expectation that one is supposed to settle down at a certain point. When asked if he agrees with the concept of the nuclear family tied to home Parker commented:

Yes I agree. [But] my home doesn’t fit at all. Considering my age (I’m almost 40 years old); I’m single; I don’t have children; I don’t own my own home. The big thing at this age is that you should be settled, you should have your own home; your own offspring; you should be married. I think I’m the complete antithesis of that. I know I’m not the only one. There are lots of people like that (interview 2 February 2011).

Parker’s experience is important here because it shows that by no means does every LGBTQ Londoner aspire to fit into a home similar to the larger ideology of home. For Mario, who lives with five other flatmates in a rented terraced house, he believed this non-family home set-up does not fit into the ideal in obvious ways, *i.e.* he is not living with a mother, a father and a few children (interview 27 April 2011). Similarly, Gary and Jack felt that their home does not fit into that picture at all. But this couple’s comments are illuminating because they show not only that home is shaped by conservative views, but also that it is a space negotiated by queer people:

Jack: Any heterosexual couple would imagine that any of the people that live in these houses [in our neighbourhood]... are the same as them. They wouldn’t think two women or two men or any other scenario might live next door.

Gary: But in the same respect, we would have also expected every other house to be like that. And that we’re the different ones. And now that we

know there are some gay people in the area it shows that it's actually quite different...

Jack: If you went across the road and asked to borrow a pint of milk you wouldn't expect a transvestite to come to the door. That would be the last thing you expected. But the chances are that you possibly could. But in your head you don't think it's possible (interview 16 January 2011).

In one additional interview a participant noted his home challenges larger ideas, but with a caveat. Julio believed he and his partner actively challenge ideological understandings of home:

I'd say if anything we rebel against convention by simply always taking on decisions on how *we* would want the outcome to be and not what others think is best for us. This is certainly our approach with children. Rather than feeling bad that we don't want any we have started to actively campaign within our friends to have some respect and recognition for those of us who choose not to have kids (participant writing diary).

Despite noting this challenge, Julio admitted that his suburban home in south London is their own version of the family home, complete with two loving partners and a cat. While these few examples show the varying ways in which younger LGBTQ Londoners' queer heteronormativity, the fact remains that the majority of participants observed having aspirations that fit in with larger understandings of home, thereby challenging the home as the exclusive site for heterosexual and patriarchal nuclear families.

I want to switch focus briefly by drawing attention to a relevant film currently being screened at the time of writing this chapter, one which relates to the argument I put forward: *Weekend* by director Andrew Haigh (2011). Set mostly in a council flat in Nottingham, United Kingdom, the film shows a version of queer domesticity that challenges heteronormativity in a variety of ways, much like the interview transcripts noted above. After attending a gathering with heterosexual friends, Russell (actor Tom Cullen) excuses himself early and instead of heading home to bed as suggested he would do, stops off at a local gay bar where he picks up Glen (actor Chris New). The film then moves to the next morning with the two men sipping coffee in bed. Glen, who works for an art gallery, convinces hesitant Russell to narrate the previous night's sexual acts into his tape recorder for an exhibition he is working on. As a political activist and artist, Glen wants to display the post-sex narratives of gay men in the contexts of an art gallery as a way to purposefully and uncomfortably queer the heteronormative setting in which art is typically consumed. But Russell, a more introverted and less-outwardly vocal gay man, prefers an alternate route of activism: they later have an argument about same-sex marriage with each man supporting one

side and Russell declaring that he wants to settle down with one man, and lead a relatively ordinary life. Over the course of the weekend the couple find themselves falling for each other; sped up by Glen's imminent departure for studies in the United States.

What I find particularly interesting with Glen and Russell's story is that it does not depict an extraordinary version of queer domesticity and in doing so shows how minority identity can play out at home as opposed to the peripheral spaces scholars have tended to focus on. And through the medium of film and the cinema this activism is moved into a more public realm where many people can experience it, which further supports the notion that LGBTQ politics at home can be wide-reaching. The director's publicity statement shows the everydayness of the narrative: "I wanted to tell an honest, intimate and *authentic* love story" (Glendale Picture Company no date; emphasis added). And the overwhelmingly positive reviews by professional critics also capture this aspect of the film: "“Weekend” ", *New York Times* film critic Anthony Oliver Scott (2011) writes,

is also, even primarily, about the leisure-time activities of ordinary British young people, who go to clubs and children's birthday parties, settle in to marriage or seek out casual sex, and unwind after work with beer, hashish and takeout curries.

The fact that this film presents a type of quotidian experience of domesticity is enhanced by the way it has been shot, "with a kind of real-time realism" (Bradshaw 2011). Unlike the Hollywood block-busters, Scott continues,

The audience does not hear music unless the people on screen hear it too, and the overall look and sound display a studious lack of polish. The dialogue feels improvised; the editing is a mix of abrupt cuts and extended takes; and the themes emerge slowly, in keeping with the natural diffidence of the characters...

The everydayness of the film culminates in not really that much happening: Glen leaves for the United States and there is no fairy-tale ending – in fact the audience is not given a sad ending either, the two could very well keep in touch. Again, this is what critics credit with success:

A less brave, less honest movie would hasten to provide answers, assuming that the lovers require promises and that the audience needs reassurance. But "Weekend," which is about the risks and pleasures of opening up emotionally in the presence of another, remains true to the unsettled, open-ended nature of the experience it documents. And for exactly this reason – because Mr Haigh avoids the easy payoff of either a happy or a tragic ending – it is one of the most satisfying love stories you are likely to see on screen this year (Scott 2011).

Equally, the positive comments by some non-professional critics also note that because people can relate to the scenario and characters through the story's real-life approach the film is a success – a fact that I would agree with. The synopsis on amateur film review site *Rotten Tomatoes* calls it an “affecting and naturalistic romance” which earned an impressive 88%, but I want to draw attention to John B's comment below the *New York Times* review: “Finally, a story about gay relationships that is honest and authentic, devoid of the boring stereotypical depictions of previous films” (Scott 2011).²⁶ Through the subject matter, the location, and the filming technique the quotidian nature of the film is lauded in both professional and amateur reviews alike. The set design too, as shown in Figure 3.4, suggests that this could be the story of any gay couple occupying a flat in an global city high-rise.

Figure 3.4 – A still from Weekend. A movie that has been a success, I argue, based on its depiction of an everyday gay domesticity.

Weekend captures the subtleties of my argument: by showing younger sexual minorities' quotidian and mundane experiences of domesticity, heteronormative understandings of home can be challenged.

As shown throughout the chapter, the actual domestic spaces and the idealised ways that younger LGBTQ Londoners aim to set up home in future have affinity with *Weekend*. I would argue this critically acclaimed film relates more to

²⁶ This percentage from *Rotten Tomatoes* is derived from 2038 viewers (see *Rotten Tomatoes* by Flixter 2011). For a direct link to John B's comment refer to *The New York Times* 2011.

the interviewees' experiences of home than a gay domestic aesthetic currently put forward, which was discussed in the previous chapter. Few of the physical spaces, homemaking approaches, or idealised visions of home resemble exceptional, high design, modernist spaces. A further look to a few final excerpts makes this point even more clear.

Many participants felt rather than architecture or interior design, other factors might give away their sexuality to a stranger visiting the home, thus linking sexual identity with domesticity; yet in many cases this was not obvious. For instance, Michael and Bradley felt that art work in the private space of the bedroom might give a hint, but as Bradley notes "unless they spent some time looking at the books, I don't think there's anything that screams gay" (interview 11 June 2011). Alison echoes a similar point by suggesting "if you walked into my bedroom, unless you looked closely at the books or DVDs on my shelves, you wouldn't know" (interview 20 January 2011). So too does Rachel: it might "not [be obvious] on the surface, but anyone looking closely would... [find it] obvious... [but] I suppose... if you didn't know what *Diva* or the *L Word* was, you wouldn't know" (interview 24 January 2011). And finally Karen believes a repair engineer entering the home would not know the occupants' identities: "Not from the house, not necessarily; unless he looked at the book collection or DVDs, but there aren't any overt signs" (interview 12 May 2011). Julio also commented on material objects in the home: he felt the amount of "things littered about" or "valuable [objects] sitting on... [an] unsteady shelf" would signify the home he shares with his partner as an adult-only place; the lack of children might then infer to an astute person that two gay men live in the home, but not necessarily (16 February 2011).

Some interviewees felt that rather than material possessions – which are discussed at length in the next chapter – the only signifier of queer sexuality would be if both partners are in the space when the stranger visits. Derrick explains: "I don't think there is anything that would make it particularly obvious, unless we were both there at the same time. I mean we've only got one bedroom. I guess it depends on how astute the person was" (interview 6 January 2011). Kiera offers a similar view: "they might figure it out because... we call each other "sweetie" and "honey" and that sort of thing" (interview 24 February 2011).

One question I put to each interviewee, "would you say there is a theme or certain style to your home?", proved particularly useful for illuminating the ways in which younger participants' homes do not support the notion of a gay domestic

aesthetic. Talking about her home she shares with other flatmates Alison notes, “it’s just a jumble of things accumulated [and]... I feel really comfortable here” (interview 20 January 2011). Rather than discuss interior design Sharon felt the best theme to describe her home is “cluttered; I wouldn’t say it was to any particular theme, apart from functional more than anything else” (interview 10 May 2011). Evoking similar sentiments, Karen noted that her home “is quite eclectic actually... it is a bit of a mismatch... cluttered and ‘old-lady-ish’ ”. Her partner Gail felt this makes it have “kind of a cottage theme; it’s quite quaint, painted wood rather than glass tables, rather than anything like that: it’s not really minimalist at all” (interview 12 May 2011). Perhaps this interviewee more so than any other rejects the modernist style at the heart of a gay domestic aesthetic. A wooden theme, in similar ways, was used by three interviewees to describe their homes, which again stands in contrast to the architectural materials – such as glass, steel and mirrors – mentioned in the final section of chapter two. Talking about her home, which is filled with a collection of items gathered “over the years”, Kylie explains: “I suppose a lot of the furniture is probably timber. We both like the simple rural timber look... maybe country cottage”. Kiera elaborates on the theme of the home: “I think we like comfy stuff. Comfort is a big thing. We would rather have a comfortable couch than something that looks really amazingly stylish or anything like that... plain simple and practical”. Thus as a result of their interior design choices, Kiera sums up: “I don’t think they [strangers or a repair engineer] would walk in the door and go “oh, this is a lesbian household” or even “a homosexual household” ” (interview 24 February 2011). A wooden theme was also mentioned by Hugo to describe the interior space of his home. But unlike the preceding interviewees, Hugo was inspired by factors beyond his control: “My [home] is more wooden because that’s how it was when I moved in and it happens that all the furniture is wooden... so I thought “let’s make it look [like] a countryside thing” ” (interview 12 April 2011).

As suggested, these younger interviewees’ interior spaces challenge a gay domestic aesthetic in a variety of ways, whether deliberately or otherwise; more importantly they show the difficulty in normalising any representation of queer home. Economic hardship was also mentioned on more than one occasion when describing the home, which can determine both style and interior decoration. As a result of being an unwaged student, Caleb described his home, which, as noted earlier is filled with loaned and used items, as “Soviet? Fleeing one’s homeland? Something like that; it’s very council-house chic” (interview 6 January 2011). And

similarly Robert, who lives in a council flat in east London, described his home as “rough around the edges... because of the [run-down] state when I moved in” (interview 15 April 2011).

One might think the architecture of the dream home for some participants would perhaps closer resemble a gay domestic aesthetic. On the whole when discussing hypothetical modifications to the home, interviewees did not mention architectural interventions akin to a gay domestic aesthetic, though; rather enlarging rooms or relocating to a new area was brought up. One exception is Alison who felt that despite her comfort in her living situation her “own place would look so different”. She explains: “If I design my own living room it would be very clean (simple lines), linear, no ornaments around; ideally it will have a bare brick wall with black and white photographs on it” (interview 20 January 2011).

A large majority of younger interviewees discussed in this chapter rent as opposed to own, which is an important factor in understanding why the homes of this age cohort do not resemble those discussed in chapter two: as Caleb notes, with “all the strict rules imposed on us by the estate agent... we’re not even allowed to put posters on our wall... we can’t really design much” (interview 6 January 2011). Yet despite this fact, as I’ve shown, few interviewees mention having such aspirations; as I go on to show in the next chapter, older interviewees equally reject stereotypes – and the majority of that age cohort, that the research draws from, own their own homes.

The diversity of homes presented in the interview material show that one style cannot be applied to domestic spaces belonging to sexual minorities, and indeed generalisations are risky. Recalling the extraordinary and peripheral spaces analysed in the last section of chapter two, it is clear from interviews with younger participants, that home for these Londoners is completely different than a gay domestic aesthetic would suggest. I argue that it is an interesting turn for queer politics to show how sexuality unfolds in everyday, regularly frequented spaces. The depiction of domestic space which does not explicitly foreground sexuality or link to stereotypes in particular, like that staged in *Weekend* and indeed those drawn from throughout this chapter and thesis, offers a new approach to queer politics – one that challenges the most heteronormative space of all by showing the diverse and nuanced ways in which queer identity plays out at home.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to do two main things. First, it investigated themes that emerged from the research with younger LGBTQ Londoners. In looking at this cohort's experiences of home the chapter touched on youth embodiment through coming-out narratives, migration between the family home and the home established in adulthood, as well as domestic temporality and renting in London. Second, the chapter has begun the empirical task of constructing the larger argument that this younger group is queering heteronormativity in London's homes in multiple and contradictory ways. In the first half, I showed that coming out within a heterosexual domain and then moving away, whether as part of that process or at a later stage of life, does not represent a unidirectional migration. As a result of the dialogue between the family home and the home set up in adulthood, the ideological notion of home as the quintessential space of heterosexuality is challenged. In the second section the larger argument is supported by highlighting the ways in which aspirations of home for younger LGBTQ Londoners fit in with a larger societal notion of home. Thus, considering many research participants strive for a similar ideal of home, a politically quiet subversion of heteronormativity is taking place. Over the page, the next chapter takes an entirely different approach by looking to issues affecting older research participants' experiences of home, largely through the lens of domestic materiality.

Chapter 4

Older LGBTQ Londoners at Home

Introduction

In this chapter I focus on the research data from older participants to show the unique ways this cohort's homemaking practices queer heteronormativity at home.²⁷ Drawing from several transcripts, I show the heterogeneous ways that older LGBTQ Londoners simultaneously reject, challenge, and even aim to support (at least on the surface) heteronormative ideals through homemaking practices. These experiences show that queering heteronormativity is not always a radically subversive gesture; rather, a deeper investigation is needed to show the nuanced and subtle ways that dominant representations of home are challenged.

In this chapter I foreground a range of intersecting subjectivities that largely come with time and age to illuminate the manifold ways that older LGBTQ Londoners set up home. Some of these that I touch upon below include: comfort in one's sexual subjectivity; contentment in completed homemaking, which for some means a lifetime of perfecting the home; and, for many but not all, economic independence. In discussing older LGBTQ Londoners this chapter looks at interviewees over 40 years of age and the majority are actually in their fifties and sixties. Early in the transcription phase I became aware that there are marked differences in regards to homemaking between older and younger interviewees. Forty years of age seemed to be roughly when homemaking experiences shift for Londoners, which includes moving away from temporal notions of home. For some this relates to the purchase of property. I recognise that indeed life courses are individual and unique, and themes are not exclusive to specific age cohorts, such as coming to terms with one's sexuality (even though this was a main theme in the previous chapter). However, 40 also became a suitable interviewee age in which to divide the transcripts in roughly half, thereby offering a practical way to analyse the substantial quantity of interviews. While it was my hope to interview a cross-section of London's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender residents, there were limitations in the recruiting process – discussed in depth in chapter one – which can be found specifically in this chapter. As a result of tapping into networks of friends – relying on snowballing or word of mouth as a form of recruitment – the people represented in this chapter have some similarities. The research material draws from nineteen gay men (some interviews were with couples), a lesbian couple and two transgender women (in total eighteen interviews). On a few occasions I also draw from two

²⁷ 'Older' in the context of this thesis is strictly a relational adjective contrasting younger.

interviews with couples (one gay and one lesbian) that were largely cited in chapter three on younger generations (I highlight these exceptions in footnotes below). Although the transcripts are heavily weighted toward the gay male experience, the collection of transcripts offers divergent conduits to understand the queering of heteronormativity at home.²⁸

The body of the chapter is divided into two main parts. The first section, on materiality of domestic possessions, begins by offering a contextualisation of the issues surrounding ageing and home as well as socio-political changes in the UK that have shaped earlier experiences for older LGBTQ Londoners. I survey this history in order to set the stage for a closer look at the relationship between material objects and queer homemaking. In this section I show the diverse ways that older Londoners' things are used to queer home. Some of the intersections discussed above are drawn upon to depict a varied view into these spaces. In this section in particular, my own embodied positionality as a young researcher was made apparent by older interviewees who reminded me that when they were my age experiencing sexuality was much different. This allows me to briefly take up a reflexive and autobiographical voice initially put forth by feminist and queer scholars. In the second part I look to the non-material, specifically living arrangements. This section draws from interviewees who prefer to avoid foregrounding their sexuality in the process of homemaking, and therefore feel materiality was not an important lens through which their minority subjectivity is constructed at home. As suggested earlier, I argue this is an important political act and valuable way in which this cohort queers heteronormativity at home.

Materiality and experiences of home

Home for many people is about being among one's own things: the material possessions accumulated in life. Following the pioneering work of Douglas (1996 [1979]), political scientist Iris Marion Young argues "home is an arrangement of things in this space, according to the life habits of those who dwell in it". And, Young observes, homemaking is an extension of this: "I define homemaking as the activities of endowing things with living meaning, arranging them in space in order to materially facilitate the projects of those to whom they belong, and activities of preserving these things, along with their meaning" (Young 2005a: 156). Put another

²⁸ Although gender, rather than sexuality, is mainly foregrounded in the transcripts with transgender women, I argue that their experiences are important in order to present an inclusive queer thesis on home.

way, sociologist Julia Twigg argues the home provides “opportunities to extend the self in material surroundings” (Twigg 2000: 78); or as participant Gerard notes, home is “where my *things* are” (interview 10 February 2011). Similarly, Gary knew that when he moved into the home his husband owned in south London, he would not be able to take all his furniture with him, and remarked that “it was important for me to have things around me that were from my home: objects, vases, and knickknacks that are my home possessions. I brought them so that this felt like it was my home as well” (interview 16 January 2011).²⁹ It is therefore not surprising that the older one is, the more time one has had to connect with things in the home. What Twigg refers to as “opportunities” to make a home through material objects are particularly important for sexual minorities “whose sense of self includes subjectivities which are marginalized, and thus not affirmed or easily performed in the public sphere” (Gorman-Murray 2008c: 284). I extend this existing argument further and suggest that the opportunities to make a home through material possessions are especially important for older non-heterosexual people who can find themselves excluded from both heteronormative public space as well as more visible gay spaces (see chapter two). Before discussing the varied ways in which older interviewees use their material possessions to set up home, and as a result queer heteronormativity, though, it is necessary to elaborate on the exclusion of older LGBTQ people from a society obsessed with youth.

The life experiences of older LGBTQ Londoners have been shaped through socio-political changes. Historian Matt Houlbrook reminds us that until 1967 as far as the law was concerned, homosexual men had no right to legally set up home together; gay men were an attack on normative domesticity, “an evil that the state could not tolerate” (Houlbrook 2005: 110). In fact a Law Society memo explicitly stated that “male persons living together do not constitute domestic life” (cited in Houlbrook 2005: 110). Without denying the very real persistence of homophobic violence that still exists in the UK – and is widespread in other parts of world where “social obloquy, long imprisonment, even death (by stoning or beheading) remain the fate of many homosexual people” (Weeks 2007: 12; Bamforth 2005) – older age cohorts in London have lived through improvements in equality. In the introduction I noted the transition in the way people can experience sexual minority identity, but

²⁹ I include Gary and Jack in both chapter three and four as their ages span the divide between the two age cohorts – respectively 30 and 45.

Weeks clearly speaks to these changes in British history in his optimistic book *The World We Have Won*:

What seemed unthinkable thirty years ago, impossible twenty years ago, improbable (at least in famously slow-moving Britain) ten years ago, is now up and running with only the rumblings of the evangelical religious and the occasional jokes about who does the dishes and wears the trousers to remind us of an earlier time when *heterosexual* marriage was the only access to sanctioned sexuality and respectability, and when homosexuals were ‘the most evil men in Britain’ (Weeks 2007: 2–3; emphasis in original).

Yet ageism is still something that continues to confront older people, LGBTQs and heterosexuals alike.

Geographers Anne Varley and Maribel Blasco have shown in their research on masculinities in urban Mexico that “the difficulties facing some elderly men are intimately connected to the way in which older men are devalued or ‘degendered’ by hegemonic masculinities” (2001: 117). Similarly, in their study looking at working-class and middle-class experiences of ‘old age’ in Northern English towns, geographers Rachel Pain, Graham Mowl, and Carol Talbot found that “those who are seen to have characteristics of working-class people, femininity or disability are more likely to be embodied with negative characteristics of ageing” (Pain *et al.* 2000: 379). As I show below, this argument extends to non-heteronormative sexuality – in that LGBTQ people also face unique negative experiences of ageing. Pain *et al.*, like Varley and Blasco, argue “that older working-class men in particular lose ‘value’ on retirement from paid work and thus experience a difficult transition”, which, as they explore in their article, relates to the ways in which social spaces are experienced (Pain *et al.* 2000: 381; 380). These scholars show that (particularly for working classes) value is placed on youth; evident in that the ‘productive’ years are generally seen as the twenties, thirties and forties, and as one ages one slips further into the ‘unproductive’ category (Pain *et al.* 2000: 381; see also Walker 1981; Estes 1986).

Hegemony has played a role in the ‘desexing’ of older people, for example it is often assumed that older people are sexually inactive (King and Cronin 2010, 86) – again, one’s younger years are linked to productivity *i.e.* producing offspring. Gay culture is also guilty of favouring younger generations. As human development researchers Jim Wahler and Sarah G. Gabbay (1997) observe, this means there are several “unique challenges” that older lesbian and gay men face, including an accelerated sense of ageing, particularly among men: “where some gay men exhibit heightened concern with body identity and feel old at a younger age than

heterosexual men” (Gorman-Murray 2013: c.97; see also Pugh 2002: 177; Jones and Pugh 2005; Drummond 2006; Slevin and Linneman 2010; and Robinson 2008).

One of my own memories of an advertisement is fitting here. I remember visiting Toronto’s gay village in the mid-late 2000s where a large billboard hoisted over the main intersection of Church and Wellesley encouraged older men to purchase Botox injections. The advertisement depicted an approximately 40 year old man with the command “Level the Playing Field” written across the image. This advertisement is telling in that it suggested that one would need cosmetic injections in order to have a fighting chance to find a partner in the youth-obsessed gay culture; equally noteworthy is its location at the very heart of Canada’s largest gay commercial cluster.

As a result of a youth obsession, older people can find themselves excluded. Research participant Roger is one of them: he notes, “I found as I’ve got older... I haven’t been to Soho in ages [one of London’s gay commercial clusters]; I went once in 3.5 years... I just don’t think I identify very much, particularly as I’ve got older, with the whole gay [scene]” (interview 27 April 2011). It can be argued that older gay men in particular negotiate their identity in terms of dual layers of ageism: gay ageism with its obsession with youthful culture, but also mainstream homophobic ageism. Thus, “both gay and mainstream discourses about sexuality and ageing marginalise them... rendering them present but unwelcome, wishing them absent” (Gorman-Murray 2013: c.99). In light of this double marginalisation, older gay men as well as other sexual minorities find themselves excluded from public zones (Jones and Pugh 2005: 258; see also Forsyth 1997 who discusses the spatial exclusion of lesbians in general). There is a gap in the scholarly literature that looks at sexual identity and older people’s experiences of home (Gorman-Murray 2006a: 72; Gorman-Murray 2013: c.96). This is ever more pressing as “it is now 30–40 years since the ‘gay liberation’ era of the 1970s, and for the first time there are increasing numbers of ‘out’ gay men [as well as other sexual minorities] entering older age cohorts” (Gorman-Murray 2008a, 376). As the research suggests, as this age cohort continues to age experiences of home will be renegotiated.

There is a clear link between homophobia and ageism that older LGBTQ people face, but in the past extensive homophobic policy and social discourse shaped this group’s experience of sexuality. Sociologist and social worker Stephen Pugh suggests that as a result of the socio-political inequality this group has been “extremely successful [at maintaining] anonymity”:

This anonymity was based on the need to avoid detection at times when same sex relationships were either criminalized or subject to severe social restriction and sanction. For older lesbians and gay men, this was a reality through most of their adult lives and will have informed how same sex relationships were established, how they were conducted and even how their image of self was formulated (Pugh 2002: 162).

There were two major changes that took place in UK governmental policy that would have happened in older interviewees' lifetime and that would have directly impacted the way they experienced their minority identity in public and at home: first, in 1967 the Sexual Offences Act decriminalised consensual male same-sex intimacy in private in England and Wales (this happened much later in Scotland and Northern Ireland); and second, from 1988 until 2000 in Scotland, and until 2003 in England and Wales, the censorship law, ultimately known as Section 28, prohibited the promotion of homosexuality as a "pretend family relationship" (Weeks 1990). Although The Sexual Offences Act might be initially understood as a step towards equality, in actual fact this period saw dramatic increases in arrests for public sex and soliciting. This change reinforced the home as the only safe place in which to act upon same-sex desire, but finding someone to take home was difficult in the days before gay bars and other forms of meeting people existed. Eric is one interviewee that remembered how difficult it was to find someone back then:

Young people can go anywhere, there's clubs and the internet. When I think back... how awful it really was! We couldn't go to a bar or anything and think we could meet someone: as I said, it was furtive, it was horrible (interview 4 February 2011).

Section 28, "the most significant attack on the lesbian and gay community for almost a hundred years", saw a step backward for equality with many businesses forced to desist selling homosexual material, which in some ways forced the movement underground and into private dwellings, while simultaneously having the effect of consolidating the gay movement in protest (Weeks 2007: 17; Cook 2007). The official state-sponsored homophobia that shaped the earlier lives of older gay Londoners can explain why this group values the privacy and refuge that can be found in the home and why displaying material possessions in the space is an important process in the construction of identity. The events that inflected home with increased importance for sexual minorities in the mid-to-late twentieth century can be read as repeating an earlier history. Art historian John Potvin observes:

Since 1885, under the Labouchère Amendment, gross indecency was no longer an issue of public safety, but deviancy was now a concern for and to be regulated within the home as well [*sic*]... In light of such laws, it comes as no surprise that interior space and identity became the site of institutional

and public scrutiny particularly as it concerned gender and sexuality (Potvin 2013: c.101).

The implications of oppressive history is an on-going factor in the identity process, particularly as older sexual minorities continue to age and begin to rely on homecare providers (Pugh 2002: 163; see also Coleman 1993 and Percival 2002). Journalist V. King Macdona offers a poignant point: “The fear of having to discuss the subject of sexuality and reveal personal circumstances to healthcare workers and organisations is one significant problem for a large proportion of elderly gay people” (Macdona 2009). Therefore paying attention to the experiences of home for older generations and being respectful of the socio-political history that has shaped their identity is important for researchers and governmental bodies alike.

Geographers Gordon Waitt and Gorman-Murray are two scholars that draw attention to the role history has played for older gay men in the context of Australia: “these men”, they argue, “had therefore lived through the change in the definition of homosexuality from a ‘deviance,’ ‘illness,’ ‘perversion’ or ‘sin’ to an expression of sexuality, and a basis for a visible community and public identity” (Waitt and Gorman-Murray 2007: 572). A look at the interview with seventy-eight year old research participant Basil and his husband Barclay offers a snapshot of what it was like managing one’s gay identity in a time when it was illegal in the UK. Basil notes:

You younger people have a lot more confidence than we had...
I was a real ‘closet queen’ when I was young. I was engaged three times to girls, this is possibly because of my Jewish background. I lived in a Jewish area, I was a young Jewish solicitor, and I was quite a good catch, I was quite well off. I struggled to appear straight and it was only when I left Manchester at the age of 31 and came down [to London] with a guy much younger than myself (we were together about 22 years), it was only then that I gradually became confident in my own orientation. And that’s a big difference between the generations. Because I imagine a lot of my contemporaries probably felt the same way. You *had* to hide it.

Thus, Basil’s narrative of being a ‘closet queen’ and being engaged to three women substantiates Pugh’s claim that,

The criminalization of sex between men had the result that many gay men maintained aspects of their lives hidden from the rest of society or entered heterosexual relationships in the belief that this was *normal* and through which they could avoid public scrutiny (Pugh 2002: 170; emphasis in original).

There is no doubt that censorship played a key role in the construction of earlier minority identity, and, as shown in chapter three, there may be some truth in Basil’s claim that younger people have a lot more confidence and as a result can experience sexuality at home in different ways. Many of the older participants noted having to

leave home before coming out; however, the majority of younger interviewees identified with this aspect of self while still living in the family home. In their study of an Australian provincial town, Waitt and Gorman-Murray found a similar conclusion that older LGBTQ people engage with sexuality and home in different ways than younger cohorts:

These older openly gay men were also no longer grappling with issues of self-esteem or self-acceptance. As ‘out’ gay men, they did not self-impose a layer of marginality through segmenting their sexual subjectivities from family, jobs, friends and neighbours (Waitt and Gorman-Murray 2007: 572).

In all of the interviews with older participants it was clear that they were out to people that are an important part of their daily lives, and I argue that this implicit comfort in one’s own identity plays a role in the way home is experienced and material possessions are engaged.

The interview with Basil and Barclay continues:

Barclay: The big difference between Basil and me (because I’m 22 years younger), [he] lived in a very repressive society in those days; in fact it was a crime, so you had to keep it very quiet. The law was extremely difficult until 1967.

Basil: I was a lawyer going into court defending people on gay charges and I was a criminal myself! Because *I* certainly indulged.

Barclay: Whereas my evolution was very different (being Dutch). Holland was a much more liberal country in those days; the UK has very much caught up now. In the 1970s it wasn’t.

Basil suggests that younger generations experience sexuality differently:

In many ways your generation (not in every way) is much luckier... I think you have a much greater freedom. Life is certainly a lot easier for you. The major thing is that, if you want to have a partner and start a family you can do that. In my time it was very difficult.

Not only does this excerpt speak to the repressive period in Basil’s younger life, it shows how far equality has come in Britain during his lifetime – he was able to legally recognise his relationship with Barclay, notably on the very first day in 2005 in which it was legal to enter a civil partnership (interview 30 March 2011). Further, through telling his experiences of negotiating his sexuality in a repressive age, I was conscious of my own positionality as someone from a different generation “with more confidence”, that “is much luckier” and in many ways has more freedom to find happiness. Highlighting reflexivity reinforces the importance of queer and feminist literatures, which uses this as an approach to break down the way knowledge is produced. It is entirely feasible that generational differences between

researcher and *researched* resulted in Basil's rich responses. Ultimately "perfect 'matching' of researcher to researched is rarely possible given the great social diversity of older (and all) people" (Pain *et al.* 2000: 381, footnote 3; see also Harper and Laws 1995).

To return to look at Eric's home life illustrates an additional challenge – beyond political policy, yet influenced by the social climate of the age – which current same-sex partners would not face: getting a mortgage. In the late 1980s, Eric recalled, although it was not illegal *per se* for two men to jointly take out a home mortgage together, in keeping with the prevalent societal view of the time several lending institutions discouraged them from doing so. Thus in order to maximise their chances of getting a loan, the home had to go into one partner's name (clarified in a follow up phone conversation, 30 January 2011).

Along with ageism and homophobic political policy, there is another factor that played a role in the formulation of identity for older sexual minorities that cannot be overlooked which has also influenced the importance of home: the HIV/AIDS epidemic that began in the early 1980s. The crisis which particularly affected the gay community saw a backlash of homophobia on many levels. Not only has it affected older generations who lived through the peak of the crisis and lost many close friends and loved ones, but it continues to form aspects of identity for both older and younger queer people alike. In other words,

AIDS [became] the backdrop for young gay men who are currently exploring their sexuality while for those who are older, it is a disease which emerged after the development of their sexuality and one that should inform a change in sexual behaviour (Pugh 2002: 166).

Weeks in fact suggests that Section 28 was a direct attack by the conservative government on the gay community (Weeks 1990: 238). The 1980s/early-1990s was a period of particular difficulty for gay men and especially for those that contracted the disease. This affected many aspects of life beyond the public realm including the workplace and experiences of home: many avoided leaving home because of physical changes to their bodies and fear of homophobic attacks. And some gay men came to see "the interior as a way to shelter, butch-up and gentrify their lives" following the AIDS crisis (Potvin forthcoming: c.13). One older interviewee shared his HIV positive status during our interview and noted that his health needs continue to directly relate to his experience of home:

I do have some medical problems things that have hung around since the... 1990s. I find it difficult to stay there for any long period: I couldn't be there for two or three days without going out because I don't socialise in the local

area. So I really need to get out. But that's not to do with the area and the house but I think it's to do with my nervous disposition. I would go mad if I was just sitting in the house watching television... When I have spent two or three days there without going out or without meeting any of my friends it's more like a prison... I would find it very depressing (interview anonymous).³⁰

This interviewee complicates the argument that socio-political policy and other forms of discrimination have impacted experiences of home.

Looking at the ageing body and homespace Mowl, Pain and Talbot argue that attachment to home is influenced by identity factors such as among others, health status and gender. Particularly for men, they find, the importance of home is renegotiated in one's retirement years. In their research male interviewees were used to being away from the home for work (unlike many of the female interviewees); therefore for men, spending increasing "time at home was seen to be linked to physical decline, which is viewed as heralding old age" (Mowl *et al.* 2000: 193). Although the research data from Mowl *et al.* is drawn from heterosexual respondents, one LGBTQ interviewee from my own research would agree that spending extra time at home in retirement is to be avoided, the fact remains that many other LGBTQ people find home an important space particularly as one ages.

It is not my intention to suggest that the history of oppression has unanimously negatively affected every older person. As Pugh observes, there is a "temptation to assume that the experience of being a lesbian or gay man at a time when criminal and social sanctions were severe and real was awful and affected everybody in discernibly negative ways" (Pugh 2002: 162). Rather I suggest a history of oppression in society and from political policy offers a substantial point of departure in which to understand older LGBTQ Londoners' experiences and ideas of home. In other words, in that inequality was part of everyday life in their formative years, it is an important factor of contextualisation; and as a result of deep-rooted discrimination that has existed throughout a substantial part of older LGBTQ Londoners' lives, the home has become a particularly significant space of identity formation but also one of safety.

Many older interviewees noted that aspects of safety and physical security were integral to their notion of what constitutes a home. Ritchie notes it is "a place of refuge"; while Dean describes it in one word: "security"; and Roger felt it is both

³⁰ To respect privacy and anonymity I have decided to leave out this interviewee's name and citation. Even though I use pseudonyms throughout, I want to avoid all possibility of disclosing this personal and sensitive information.

“safety and security” (interviews: 20 April 2011; 7 February 2011; 18 February 2011; 27 April 2011). Eric similarly remarks that home is “a safe harbour from the outside world”, and Basil and Barclay suggest “it’s a place where we feel safe and ourselves” (interviews: 4 February 2011; 30 March 2011). Jack believes that more than anything “it’s a place of safety. It’s about relaxing too, but ultimately somewhere that’s safe”; and finally James observes that “home, for me, is the place, or any place, where you feel safe” (interviews: 16 January 2011; 13 April 2011).

In arguing that a history of homophobia has invested the queer home with significance, parallels can be drawn with hooks’s work on African American women in the United States. In her influential essay, “Homeplace a Site of Resistance” (1990), hooks argues that white feminists have encouraged women to reject the domestic environment in which patriarchy has imprisoned them, but paradoxically this has shifted oppression along racial lines. Rather, hooks shows that home is a political site of resistance for this minority:

Despite the brutal reality of racial apartheid, of domination, one’s homeplace was the one site where one could freely confront the issue of humanization, *where one could resist*. Black women resisted by making home where all black people could strive to be subjects, not objects (hooks 1990: 42; emphasis added).

Thus through drawing on the experiences of African American women hooks shows that home is “the site for a self-conscious constructed identity as a political project of criticism and transformation of unjust institutions and practices” (Young 2005b: 149). The salient point in hooks’s argument is that home is a site in which “the oppressed in particular can and have used as a vehicle for developing resistance to oppression”. In her extension of hooks’s thesis, Young argues that home empowers women with “a sense of agency” and therefore “the proper response is not to reject home, but to extend its positive values to everyone” (Young 2005b: 150, 149). Following this line of thought, for LGBTQ subjectivities home is a site of resistance against the constraints of heteronormativity, a place where oppression can be overcome in the act of creating a safe and secure environment in which to embody sexual identity (Elwood 2000 also draws links between hooks’s argument and the queer home, specifically lesbian living spaces). In light of this, and thinking back to the trend which inadvertently risks normalising queer space and experience (*cf.* Warner, Betsky *et al.*), discussed in chapter two, I would argue, to discount home in favour of peripheral spaces is an oversight. Indeed recognising the significance of home in fostering identity, the ordinary domestic sphere, as opposed to exclusive

homes that contribute to a gay domestic aesthetic, can work towards subverting heteronormativity.

The domestic environment for older LGBTQ people can be especially significant because, as I have shown above, within their lifetimes “the private space of the home, became the first legally ‘safe space’ for the exploration and enactment of queer identity” (Kentlyn 2008: 330). This is not to suggest that the queer home is immune to fractures within this model: along with being a place of resistance, “the queer home can also be a site of oppression, exploitation and abuse” (Kentlyn 2008: 331). Indeed, it is possible even within the home that much older and less-abled people that need to rely on healthcare services may find it difficult to negotiate their sexuality when they are vulnerable. But the fact remains that on-going ageism, a history of homophobia and oppression in the public domain reinforces the importance of home for older LGBTQ Londoners. Simply put, having lived through changes in equality that took place over several decades – from a time when same-sex desire was illegal and necessitated secrecy, to the ushering in of the Civil Partnership Act (2004), for example – has meant that older non-heterosexual Londoners have been able to come to terms with their sexuality over several decades and take comfort in this aspect of identity as the social and political climate became more accepting. A brief historical outline of socio-political climate in recent decades in the UK has set the stage for a close examination of the material ways older interviewees are queering heteronormativity at home.

As noted at the beginning of this section, the ability to negotiate one’s sexual identity through material possessions is particularly important for older LGBTQ Londoners who would have had to come to terms with their identity in an era when it was illegal to do so in public. Kennedy observes that her own discipline is sensitive to this contextualising information: “not being born and raised in a public lesbian and gay culture, each gay and lesbian person has to construct his or her own life in oppressive contexts, a process that oral history is uniquely suited to reveal” (Kennedy 2006: 272). Using a queer oral history approach like that in Kennedy’s study on pre-Stonewall narratives (Kennedy 2006), I draw from participants’ experiences to argue that material encounters in the homespace play a key role in the construction of subjectivity. Investigating the interconnected relationship between material objects and home has been a thread of homemaking literature (Morrison 2012: 3). For instance, Miller (1987; 1997; 2001; 2008) has suggested that domestic

possessions underwrite subjectivity through their realisation of identity in concrete rather than abstract form:

Material things... don't jump up and down and confront you as critical symbols of yourself or your relationships. They don't theorise themselves or abstract themselves. Often one only really pays attention to them when they don't work, or look awkward or out of place. Normally they just serve, in their relatively humble way, as forms through which relationships are expressed and developed (Miller 2008: 152).

And as historians Mary Chamberlain and Paul Thompson succinctly argue,

What we wear or eat, what we discard, how we decorate our homes, the consumer choices we make, or do not make, or would wish to make, give off signs, articulate aspects of our personality, with all its complexities of dreams and aspirations, as well as status and position, wealth and class (Chamberlain and Thompson 1998: 13).

Cultural theorist Greg Noble offers a similar argument that sees the accumulation and arrangement of objects at home as materialisations of our on-going construction of subjectivity: these objects are physical realisations of personal meanings and interpersonal social relations (Noble 2004). Eric is one interviewee who I return to on more than one occasion in this chapter that spoke of the accumulation of identity through material objects at home: "to me a home ultimately absolutely starts to reflect your life. We've travelled, we've acquired things, we've inherited things from our family... [These are things we have] accumulated, things that all mean something" (interview 4 February 2011).

Another stream in the research looking at the construction of subjectivity and its relation to material possessions focuses on the mutually-constitutive relationship between personal and societal, domestic and public, consumption practices (Miller 1987; Attfield 2000; Reimer and Leslie 2004). Cook also contributes to this point when he suggests that analyses of home as a material space and a container of ideas recalls the social organisation of people and society (Cook forthcoming *c.8*); in other words, doing this "crosses the boundary between private and the public, between particular and the general" (McDowell 1999: 73; cited in Cook forthcoming: *c.8*; see also Marcus 1995). As noted at the beginning of this section, following Douglas (2012 [1991]), Young offers a similar argument that sees the "affirmation of personal and cultural identity" requiring "material expression in meaningful objects arranged" at home" (Young 2005b: 146). And the body of literature that recognises the social production of space, discussed in the introductory chapter, equally relates to the ways occupants use material possessions to meaningfully create a home; it is not

impossible to argue that material possessions are the tools of the ‘illegal [domestic] architect’ (Hill 1998: 10).

Supporting the findings of the research that argues material possessions in the home play a role in identity construction, several older interviewees noted that their sexual identity is affirmed through physical objects in the home. In what follows I show the varied and conflicting ways that materiality plays out within the queer home and how objects work in diverse ways to queer heteronormativity at home. Every interviewee noted that they are comfortable in their LGBTQ subjectivity and are, for the most part, out to family and friends, but despite this fact, the relationship to one’s sexuality can play out in the home in many ways; in the next section I discuss this further and acknowledge this is a result of self-selecting recruitment *i.e.* one must be out to a certain degree in order to reply to my request for an interview.

One way in which queer identity manifests itself at home through material objects is through the display of homoerotic artwork, which when compared to the homeowner’s gender makes visible one’s homosexuality. Darrell, for instance, notes: “I’ve got a little African stone carving with a huge cock... a couple of paintings of nice looking men” (interview 24 March 2011). Devin’s home was also used to display objects of an erotic nature. After stating that “it’s not hard to pick out that a gay man lives here, particularly from the artwork”, he then pointed out an explicit nude male calendar behind me in his kitchen. Devin’s home is particularly interesting because of the many homoerotic artworks but also due to the museum-like qualities invested in the main entry space. He notes: “in the hallway there are club flyers and stuff that I bought over the years. And in the sitting room there are photographs of the England Rugby shots when they did their naked shots which I bought” (Figure 4.1). The consciousness to which these have been placed in his home is evident in that six months prior to our interview he had “a mass clear out”, therefore he notes “what’s in the house now are things that I know I want *ad infinitum*” (interview 9 January 2011).



Figure 4.1 – Devin’s home acts as a container for materiality relating to his gay subjectivity. The centre upper image is of his lounge room, while the image on the right is taken from the entrance foyer looking down the hallway to his bedroom, and the remaining three are close-ups of his memorial hallway.

Devin’s home, with the homoerotic artwork, flyers from his younger clubbing days and the odd explicit photograph is, in many ways, the most obvious example of an interviewee using material objects in the home to queer heteronormativity: it is clear that these objects would not be found in such visible ways in a heteronormative home (although they could be found, for instance, veiled in a teenager’s bedroom, if he or she is not out). Despite its visible manifestation of minority identity which stands in contrast to heteronormatively decorated homes, Devin’s artwork can be understood in another light, too. As evident in the upper middle picture above, multiple aspects of his identity are simultaneously displayed, his love for horses and his attraction to the male body; thus “various objects embody different facets of self” (Gorman-Murray 2008c: 286).

A few other older interviewees also used artwork in the construction of sexual subjectivity, yet in less explicit ways than outlined above. Similar to the example above, two other interviewees have male calendars in their homes, yet both show shirtless rather than nude men. Dean has one in his kitchen on a wall that is not in plain view and Dale noted he has a male calendar in his bedroom. Dale felt it was one of the few objects that would identify his home as gay-owned to an outsider. Yet

the location of the calendar in the bedroom is worth noting in detail. I asked Dale if he kept it out of sight because of its homoerotic content and his response was: “it’s not hidden in the bedroom” it’s only because “as a calendar it’s pretty rubbish, so we have a calendar in our dining room that we can write on” (interview 20 January 2011). Both of these interviewees have male calendars and keep them out of plain view, yet this does not mean they do not relate to sexuality through other objects, as I show below.

Gerard is another older male interviewee who commented that a few pieces of artwork relate to his sexual identity (Figure 4.2): “I’ve got a little statue that I keep next to my bed called Adam and Steve. I’ll go get it and show it to you. It’s a South African artist who specialises in this style.”



Figure 4.2 – A small statue, a possession that relates to Gerard’s sexual identity, sits next to his bed,

This object is interesting for two reasons: although both figures are male nudes, it is not explicit; and its location in the room where intimacy is through to happen, out of view from visitors that come into the home, is telling. Simply put, only select invited visitors would see the object. The position of homoerotic objects – whether explicit or otherwise – within view of the home’s occupier, yet out of reach from visitors is one way to be selective and control who sees sexual identifying material possessions, yet there is another way objects are mediated. Gerard continues:

I've got a few other [objects of interest, such as this one]. It's pottery. It's glazed and if you turn it over it's got male genitalia engraved underneath. It's one of those things that you go "that's very nice" then you turn it over and go "AHHH"... If the cleaning lady is not blind she wouldn't have any difficulty figuring it out" (interview 10 February 2011).

The left image of Figure 4.3 shows the object as most visitors would see it, and the right image would be the view that few regular visitors to the home would see, including the cleaning lady.



Figure 4.3 – Pottery in Gerard's home that he suggests when turned over relates to his sexual identity.

The display of these objects begins to show the ways material objects in the home queer heteronormativity. Through the careful display of sexual identifying objects the home may seem on first glance to be just like any other. Gerard shared an interesting story of a visit to a friend's house that highlights the way one could use dual-functioning artwork to, when one wishes, make the home appear heteronormative, but then at other times queer the space. Gerard notes:

A friend of mine had two photographs of two very explicit photographs of two naked men. And I went into his bedroom and there was a very nice watercolour on the wall. And I said "what happened to your photographs?". "Oh they're on the back", and he turned them around. The photographs were double framed! "Oh, my parents were coming to visit so I switched them around". He would move them deliberately if someone was coming into his flat (interview 10 February 2011).

In the case of homoerotic artwork, whether explicit or otherwise, the body becomes sexualised only when read in terms of the owner's own queer subjectivity; speaking to gay-identifying objects in his home Barclay notes:

That male torso [statue] there, it's obviously something which pleased us because it is of the male body. And there's a bronze in the hallway which would appeal to gay people; there's a beautiful one in [our house in] Majorca; again, all male figures (interview 30 March 2011).

In all cases in this research the body was male. Although this chapter largely draws from experiences of gay men, none of the women or any transgendered interviewees mentioned erotic artwork at home. Of course not all artwork in older LGBTQ Londoners' homes is homoerotic, and indeed many respondents mentioned other art that was important in the construction of subjectivity. It is these less-obvious material possessions, I argue, that show the creative ways heteronormativity can be queered. Continuing to look at Gerard's home highlights how personal narratives can uncover the hidden ways artwork plays a role in the construction of identity management:

I suppose the things I value the most are the artworks... The artwork is not overtly sexual... [that piece in particular called] *The Diva of Luca*, which is by a fairly well known artist that lives in Italy. I had a house in Italy, so I suppose you could say I was identifying myself with it (because that was my nick-name).

Thus by playing on the term 'diva', which is a trope linked to many gay cultural figures and is a gay stereotype generally, Gerard observes that this painting speaks to his own gay subjectivity (Figure 4.4). Halperin's *How to be Gay* (2012), introduced in the opening chapter, offers in-depth discussions on gay icons and Gerard's identification with gay culture, Halperin would argue, would have been originally learned.



Figure 4.4 – The Diva of Luca by artist John Bellamy displayed in Gerard's home. He suggests this is an important object which relates – albeit subtly – to his sexual identity.

Gerard felt that although on the one hand this artwork doesn't overtly speak to his sexuality, on the other "you might say that a single heterosexual man probably wouldn't have [this or] Hayden ballet prints on the wall, he would probably have David Beckham scoring a goal" (interview 10 February 2011). Along similar lines, Barclay felt that the interior design and materiality of his home would contrast a straight male home:

I think two straight guys sharing a house would not have the same sort of flare, generally speaking, unless one was particularly interested in design. I have a lot of flowers around. We do fiddle around with paintings and how things look... I think probably we have a lot more time to think about it because we don't have children (interview 30 March 2011).

Only through listening to his explanation of the artwork one begins to understand that this piece works to queer heteronormativity.

Similar to Gerard's subjective explanation of the above artwork, through the link of diva identity, Dean felt his expansive CD collection, one of his most valued possessions, relates "without any doubt" to his queer identity:

Well yes, because being into opera and having been to opera since an early age... I suppose I identify being into opera to a certain degree with being gay, because there is a great gay following of opera with gay icons. Thinking about Maria Callas, and there is a lot of diva-ishness with it all. So yes I suppose I do. Ninety five per cent of my CDs are opera and musicals, you see so I must be gay (interview 18 February 2011)!

Figure 4.5 is a photograph of Dean's entryway which shows only part of the CD collection that covers many wall surfaces in his small north London flat.

Additionally, the framed photograph mounted to the left of the door is of diva opera singer Maria Callas (1923–1977).



Figure 4.5 – This image shows Dean’s foyer, which, much like his lounge room, houses his expansive CD collection. The wooden box at left (on top of the dresser) is a collector’s set of the music from diva opera singer Maria Callas (also pictured on the wall to the left of the door).

Thus through the process of interviewing Dean and understanding the meaningfulness of his CD collection it became clear that opera and CDs are one way in which his domestic environment subtly queers home.

Like Devin discussed above, who noted the objects in his home will remain “*ad infinitum*”, Dean spoke of his home decorating, now “in its fourth reincarnation”, as essentially complete. The meaningfulness of his CD collection is clear in that living in a small flat has necessitated, over the years, conscious decisions on what to keep and what to throw away. He observes, “yes, absolutely” all objects have meaning,

I would have gotten rid of it if they didn’t. When I see other people’s houses I always think “there is nothing to identify them”. Everything here means something to me; I wouldn’t have it in the flat if it didn’t mean something; it would be pointless (interview 18 February 2011).

In her ethnographic study of sixteen households in North East England, Gregson argues that “getting rid of things, along with sorting, holding and keeping them, and not just acquisition is fundamental” to the way in which as social beings humans make a homespace. Focusing specifically on ridding, which has been often

overlooked in the literature on consumption, Gregson suggests that dwelling is an on-going balance between not just appropriation but also divestment (Gregson 2007: 24; 21). As Dean's sense of completeness with respect to making a home suggests, for some older people who have had a lifetime of perfecting the act of appropriation and divestment, objects in the home are the result of an increased consciousness of identity subjectivity.

As shown, interviewees Gerard and Dean share an approach which sees a gay trope linked to their experiences of material homemaking; similarly one additional participant draws on another stereotypical identity characteristic in his explanation of a domestic material object that relates to his sexuality. Adam stressed the importance of an object in his home which conflates two aspects of his identity: his Scottish upbringing and his gay identity. The Royal Standard of Scotland is the item which takes on this dual intersectional role for this participant. Adam explained that the flag is flown at Edinburgh's Palace of Holyroodhouse year round, unless the Queen is in residence, and in light of the parlance which sees a gay man as 'queen' (Houlbrook 2005: 7), he feels that displaying it over his bed has a humorous double meaning (interview 31 March 2011) (Figure 4.6).



Figure 4.6 – The Royal Standard of Scotland which is flown over Adam's bed, not only because of his Scottish upbringing, but also because of its link to nation and sexuality i.e. the Queen (Monarch) and 'queen' (gay man).

Adam's narrative explains how a national flag can work in an associational way to queer a domestic setting.

Adam also offers another example of an object in the home relating to his gay identity, and he also felt it does not outwardly reflect this aspect of his subjectivity in obvious ways. He comments: “I have a rainbow thing, one of those things that hang down from the ceiling [that] twirls around... I have one of those in my bathroom” (Figure 4.7).



Figure 4.7 – An object in Adam’s bathroom that relates to his gay identity.

Although Adam suggests it is “my [only] token demonstration of my sexuality” he felt that its significance is lost on some visitors: “it doesn’t say anything on it, it’s just a rainbow-type image” (interview 31 March 2011). On the one hand the image of a rainbow is quite recognisably related to LGBTQ identity and pride and this object allows him to have something in his home that links him to the gay community, but on the other hand it does not declare his sexuality in obvious ways to his family, who sometimes visit and do not know he is gay. Both of these examples as well as a few others mentioned in this chapter highlight the highly-coded status of some domestic objects, where double meanings abound. One must be an insider, or in the know, to get the joke or understand the underlying signification: privacy is a layered thing. Thus, Adam feels unless one is privy to the history of the pride flag or to the double meaning of ‘queen’, which his family are not, then the significance remains private and personal. These layered objects queer heteronormativity in subjective and subtle ways.

In the above instances, artwork, CDs, and even flags are drawn upon to show the varied ways homes are being queered, but a few additional common material objects can be found in the interviews data. Books, for example, were mentioned on more than one occasion as playing a role in the process of identity management. Darrell remarked “I suppose individually some of the books certainly [reflect my gay identity] – well the non-fiction ones (and some of the fiction ones)”. And it is no coincidence that Darrell invests significant meaning in these objects: “the books are the things I value the most” (interview 24 March 2011). Peter commented that he too has some books, however he didn’t think that would identify his home as gay occupied unless a visitor looked closely: “I’ve got a few gay-type novels but I don’t think you’d wander in here and think immediately “ah ha, it’s [the home of] a gay couple” ” (interview 9 March 2011). Therefore books relating to a gay subject are another way in which material possessions allow sexuality to be displayed in the home. But as suggested, this example of the queering of heteronormativity is done in subtle ways: one would have to look closely at the spines to see the signification.

Another common material object that contrasts the subtle nature of books is photographs of same-sex partners, which were brought up on more than one occasion by interviewees. Transgendered participant Janet offers one example:

There are reasonably obvious clues. There are pictures around the house, ones from our civil partnership; ones from degree ceremonies just in the hallway. So it’s quite clear that we’re a couple. So photographs are a main give away (interview 16 May 2011).

And similarly Dale noted there are photographs from his civil partnership. He also remarked that because they have moved a couple of times in recent years and because their house is a minimalist style, they have very few items, but those that they do have are kept “for sentimental or aesthetic reasons” (interview 20 January 2011). Finally, although James tries not to get attached to objects because he moves frequently, he does have a few photographs that he has kept where “two people from the same sex are kissing or being intimate”, for example one of him and his partner and others showing male as well as female friends being affectionate (interview 13 April 2011).

Rose (2003) has looked to the ways in which family photographs are arranged, displayed and viewed in the production of homespace. Rose acknowledges that displays of domestic family photographs are mediated moments that show families at leisure, and at the same time erase “family tension or conflict” (Rose 2004: 550; Rose 2003: 6). Morrison extends this in her study of material

constructions of heterosexuality at home by arguing that couple photographs “usually signify an important heterosexual event, such as engagement parties and weddings” (Morrison 2012: 5). Morrison suggests the wedding photographs in particular are “instrumental in performing heterosexuality in and through domestic space” (Morrison 2012: 8); in other words, the wedding photograph is a “powerful marker of a couple’s ‘normality’, morality, productivity and ‘appropriate’ gendered subjectivities” (Johnston 2006: 192). In light of this, I would argue that the material engagement and domestic display of same-sex family portraits, in particular those from civil partnership ceremonies, offer a queering of the most sanctioned heteronormative tradition of all: the normative marriage union.³¹ Although same-sex couple portraits are not explicit such as, for instance, homoerotic artwork, they queer heteronormativity at home in different yet equally powerful ways. Janet’s civil ceremony photographs are especially thought-provoking. After transitioning Janet commented that in order to be legally recognised as female she and her wife had to get divorced from their heterosexual marriage, but on the very next day they were “put back together” in a civil ceremony (interview 16 May 2011). Thus the display of photographs in the home from this event adds another layer to the argument that these objects queer heteronormativity in a home that was once on the surface a heterosexual nuclear family home.

A look into the family room of older transgendered participant Margaret offers further challenges to the ways that heteronormativity is reproduced and queered through marital photographs.³² Margaret shared a narrative of her journey to the opposite sex with me in our interview, and despite the transition Margaret’s home continues to speak to both her earlier lifecourse as a father and husband and to her more recent trans identity. In Figure 4.8 one can see Margaret’s wedding day photograph (a higher-quality reproduction is included in the lower left inset) as well as images of her children sitting on top of the fireplace, a place in which many heteronormative homes equally display nuclear family photographs.

³¹ Read together Smith (2010) and Rolfe and Peel (2011) offer more on this and position advanced arguments on how same-sex marriage and civil unions both challenge and support normative institutions. Further, Goodwin, Lyons and Stephens make the case that although heteronormativity is challenged in clear ways following the passing of New Zealand’s *Civil Union Act* (2004), ‘discourses act to restrict the extent to which ‘homosexual’ subjects are considered “valid” and “legitimate” citizens’ (Forthcoming c. 1). Indeed, regardless of new legal rights, heteronormativity remains deeply ingrained in concepts of citizenship across nation-states.

³² Although it is common practice to use pseudonyms in research, I use Margaret’s true forename at her request. She notes: “I certainly don’t want to be anonymous!” (email communication 8 November 2011).



Figure 4.8 – Margaret’s family room/art studio where multiple subjectivities collide. On top of the mantle are two photographs, one of her marriage depicting the newlyweds (the lower inset is an enlarged wedding photo – Margaret at left) and one of two of her children.

In this image Margaret’s multiple subjectivities can be seen, which have been shaped by time and evolved across her lifecourse. In this family space she has raised five children as the patriarch of a working-class family, but now as middle-class transgendered grandmother her new found talent of painting takes place on the family table – and indeed many of her artworks are transgender themed – all the while material possessions such as photographs have remained constant. Thus through the conscious decision to display her wedding photographs, Margaret’s homespace offers an exciting confrontation and queering of heteronormativity.

While Margaret has lived the majority of her life in the same house embodying male, husband, and father subjectivities, and transitioned relatively recently, it is not surprising that those objects in her home that speak to her femininity are most treasured (see also Pepper 2009). While most of the objects in her home have little sentimental meaning, as “it’s really just clutter”, she did mention that two objects in particular within her home are important to her:

The important thing today is my femininity, and I have taken this liberty of enclosing a photo of one of my first dresses that I bought in 2002, and wore on holiday slightly later. Also the first letter I received in my (then) new name, which obviously I kept for sentimental reasons (email communication 5 May 2011).

Thus Margaret’s dress (Figure 4.9) shows that her home is an important container for a few precious objects that affirm her female/transgender identity.



Figure 4.9 – A photograph of Margaret’s first dress taken in her home.

Although these feminine objects relate more to gender than sexuality, Margaret’s narrative illuminates the queering of home from a transgendered point of view. The fact that the objects of importance to her are gendered show that only when read in terms of her trans identity can one understand how these objects work to queer conventionality; in other words, the subtle queering here would be incomprehensible to someone unaware of her life story. In the next section I return to this notion that Margaret’s home queers heteronormativity in hidden ways when I look at non-materiality and lifestyle choices.

One final theme was raised in a handful of interview transcripts with older participants that highlight the importance of material objects in the construction of identity: the display of mementos in the home. In several cases objects in the home were discussed by interviewees because of their mnemonic attributes from a holiday abroad. Gary and Jack, for instance, noted that their most valuable possessions are “things that I’ve picked up on holidays; we always try to come back with one thing from holiday...” (interview 16 January 2011). As Dean noted, a refrigerator door can be the perfect location to store the material objects that capture memories of holidays

abroad. A look at Figure 4.10 shows that magnets represent his queer identity, *e.g.* one reads “Drama Queen”, one “Gay St” and a few have to do with his gay youth when he was a drag queen (interview 18 February 2011).



Figure 4.10 – Dean’s refrigerator door offers a space in which the memories of trips abroad and his gay subjectivity conflate in the materiality of dozens of magnets.

Therefore these mementoes display not only memories of holidays abroad but also relate to the construction of multiple subjectivities, including Dean’s gay identity. Janet also spoke to collecting objects from trips she has shared with her partner and children: “We just go walking around the high street and see something attractive and take it home. So the things we do collect have some sort of memories attached to them” (interview 16 May 2011). One final interviewee, Eric, highlighted the importance of objects for their keepsake status from holidays abroad with his partner. He notes:

I treasure most the paintings [my partner] and I have acquired over many years. Each painting means something to us, or reminds us of an event or trip, and their purchases have always been joint decisions. They decorate and enhance the home we have created together (participant writing diary).

Eric makes clear that materiality is an important process through which for older people one’s identity is created, specifically through the concept of time. Simply put, with age comes a greater opportunity to collect memories and fill a home with

objects from significant moments in one's life. Eric continues: "At our stage of life... you sort of accumulate things; this is your luggage... This comes from China: it all has meaning" (interview 4 February 2011).

This section on materiality began by offering a justification why material possessions are an important lens to understand older LGBTQ Londoners' homes. Through suggesting the home became an important safe space as a result of socio-political exclusion in the public realm I offered a brief introduction to the main changes that would have happened in the earlier lives of these older participants; I then suggested that this history of exclusion can offer one explanation why older LGBTQ Londoners specifically value home and why material possessions are an important part of making a home. The ways in which material objects work to queer heteronormativity were discussed, both in obvious and less obvious ways. Particularly with those objects that queer heteronormativity in hidden ways, the affective power of these objects only make sense through the telling of narratives. Through drawing on these transcript excerpts material objects begin to highlight a range of intersecting identities. While materiality is an important lens to understand older LGBTQ Londoners' homes, looking beyond possessions is an equally valuable method in which this age cohort constructs their identity at home and through which heteronormativity can be queered in domestic space.

Looking beyond materiality

The previous section investigated the mutually constitutive ways that sexuality relates to material possessions in the process of creating a home. Through discussing objects in interviews an interesting theme began to appear, one that I could not have expected: many older LGBTQ Londoners consciously avoided or could not comprehend the need to link their sexuality to material possessions in the process of identity construction. In her study looking at the relationship between materiality and heterosexuality specifically, Morrison also found that many of her interviewees were unable to comprehend how their sexual identity relates to objects at home. Thus, "participants' inability to articulate heterosexuality through their domestic material objects" reinforced the home as naturally heterosexual. Further, "failing to notice heterosexuality as a form of sexual subjectivity ensures the continued naturalisation of" it (Morrison 2012: 11, 13). In this section, looking to the participants who reject or cannot identify with material objects and sexuality, I show how this act works to queer heteronormativity in quiet yet politically powerful ways.

Simply put, these participants use the same approach and visible representations as the vast majority of straight society, thereby not signifying themselves as exceptional.

Looking beyond materiality, the transcript excerpts in this section build on two intersections of identity common to older participants: comfort in one's minority subjectivity and economic independence. I suggest that for the majority of older interviewees the fact of living for several generations means there has been more time to come to terms with one's sexual identity. As suggested in the previous section, often, but not exclusively, one's youth is typically when this aspect of self is confronted. This is even more so true for today's youth who benefit from older generations' liberation efforts that have ushered in changes in equality. In light of this, the interview data suggests that a higher proportion of older interviewees, compared to those people in their twenties and thirties, do not assert their sexual identity as a primary contributor in the process of homemaking.³³ Implicitly related is the theme of conceptualising the home in terms of its economic security – both in its equity sense but also in the way that these homeowners have the means to make the home exactly as they want it (many older interviewees noted having some means of financial security). For these interviewees home has been established and to all intents and purposes completely constructed as a positive place to spend time. In what follows I explore both themes; looking beyond materiality I show that for many of the older participants stereotypical notions of queer identity and aspects of sexuality more generally became less important to the homemaking processes as one ages.

Janet offers the first example of an older interviewee that felt no need to engage with materiality. She believes that there are not any “obvious things that we have that would identify us” as a queer household (interview 16 May 2011). Jason offers a similar point of view by remarking:

I'm not convinced that my personal effects exhibit my sexuality. I'm sure if you walked into my house you wouldn't know that two gay guys live there. I don't think my sexual identity reflects outwardly in anything, whether it's my clothes, living environment or personal possessions (interview 8 January 2011).

³³ As my research did not follow users over a period of time let alone their lifetime, I acknowledge that this does offer limitations. I am not suggesting that sexual identity as a contributor in the homemaking process fades as one grows older (this would be too difficult to say), but rather that for the older interviewees in this study, compared to those younger participants, this was a notable difference.

One way of discussing the ‘stuff’ inside one’s home was to ask if interviewees would display sexuality-identifying objects such as the gay pride flag. Roger offers a particularly interesting response:

The gay orientation is just part of me; it’s not what I’m all about. If there was a straight flag I wouldn’t hang that out the window either. For me, heterosexuality is as normal to me as homosexuality is; purely because I am one [(a gay man)] but I was brought up in general society as a straight society so I identify with both.

Roger’s quote is telling because not only is he incredibly comfortable in his gay identity, and therefore does not relate to sexuality-identifying objects at home, but his gay subjectivity is as normal to him as ‘normal heterosexuality’ is to society generally. His opinion and approach subverts dominant ideologies, including those by some queer theorists as discussed in chapter two, that suggest queer sexuality is radically different and unique compared to heterosexuality. Following on from this he notes:

Yes I’m gay because I sleep with men, I don’t sleep with women, but other than that I don’t really class myself as a gay person. I’m not heavily into fashion, shopping, and all the stereotypical things that gay men are supposed to do. I’d rather be knocking a wall down (interview 27 April 2011).

Despite stereotyping most gay men, this quote shows that he is proud of his sexuality while at the same time does not bring it to the fore in the way that others do.

Eric suggests that he and his partner are completely out to friends and family, and in light of the equality that the LGBTQ community has achieved he suggests that there is no longer a need to visibly display objects in his home.

His response to my query about displaying the rainbow flag suggests that there was once a need for it but now we have moved on from that:

No I wouldn’t display it. We have passed that stage now. Fortunately we don’t live in Uganda. We live in a society where it’s acceptable to be gay. [My partner] and I have entered a civil partnership we are totally and utterly accepted by our friends and families and there is no need to have these outward signs of being gay because people know, the ones who need to know *know*.

Following on from Roger’s point above, which is reflective of many of the interview excerpts in this section, Eric felt that his sexuality is “not that important” and it does not reflect outwardly in his homemaking; in fact, he even draws a line between two different types of sexual subjectivities and domestic representations:

No [my home does not reflect our sexuality]. I don’t see how it could! For me it’s what you are as a person... sexuality becomes far less important. We are in the wonderful situation where it has become accepted and we can lead an open life and I don’t have to parade the sexuality... There are two types

as you've probably noticed: there are the slightly more political campaigning people who are in your face, "you have to know this is my flag out there, and if I want to have a picture of a naked man on my wall I don't care who walks into the room; it's my home [and I'll do what I want]". And there is the other group that is more old fashioned, traditional *etc.* And that's definitely the category we fall into, because none of us have this desire or need to surround ourselves with things that remind us of our sexuality because *it's not that important*. There are other matters that are perhaps more important... the moment everything becomes sexualised you don't see people for what they are (interview 4 February 2011).

By using words like "campaigning", "old fashioned" and "traditional", Eric establishes several dichotomies, which position him on the right of this chart:

public	/	private
protest	/	peace
argumentative	/	non-argumentative
in your face	/	unobtrusive

Thus, rather than foreground sexuality in his identity construction, other facets of self are more important to his homemaking in his view.

As in the above quotation from Eric, Dale similarly suggests that there is no need to foreground his sexual identity in the homemaking process. Apart from framed photographs from his civil union and a male calendar in the bedroom (discussed in the previous section) there are no other objects that reflect his sexuality (interview 20 January 2011). Peter also felt that in no way does the home he shares with his partner reflect their sexuality. Further, the comfort they have in their sexual orientations and that their relationship is widely known on the street means that they have no need to relate this fact of their identities to material possessions. In response to the enquiry if he would display a rainbow flag, Peter remarks:

No. I don't think my sexuality is any particular big deal. There's [*sic*] actually quite a few gay couples on the street. One couple do actually have a very small rainbow sticker on the window. But [my partner] and I are not activist in sexual politics or anything. The very last thing I would do is put up a rainbow flag up, to be honest.

Peter's comfort in his sexuality was made particularly clear toward the end of our interview when we were talking about websites that he might use. His concise conclusive response is even more telling: "[We use] very little actually; we're not really that gay" (interview 9 March 2011).

The view that sees one as "not really that gay" or which suggests sexuality "is not that important" carries certain judgements, which can take on a derisive tone, against those that are, on the contrary, 'particularly gay' – those that fit into stereotypical notions of gay subjectivity. As discussed in the introductory chapter,

this has certain implications, including negating a communal gay history, but the fact remains that there are internal distinctions and fractures between what is often considered a homogeneous group. In the interviews with older participants a few others offered similar statements, including Janice and Sarah a couple living in north London. They note:

Sarah: We're really not gay at all, are we!?

Janice: We're shit gay people. We don't have the time to be gay properly; we're workaholics.

Sarah and Janice informed me that their home was previously owned by a gay male couple, and they noted that when they came for an initial viewing the male couple's homemaking, which included colour coordinated clothes and a high-end black "gay man's kitchen" gave their sexuality away instantly, as Sarah discusses:

The two men who owned this before... I knew the minute I walked in the house that it was owned by two gay men, but that's because of the stereotypes. The cupboard door was open and all the shirts were colour coordinated and there was no way that was a straight man...

On reflection Janice joked: "I'm feeling really oppressed. I think we need a big picture of a vagina above the fireplace" (interview 17 February 2011).

Another gay couple aligns with the on-going discussion. During a break from our interview, while his partner Barclay went to top up refreshments, Basil engaged a conversation around the usefulness of his responses to my research. He noted: "I can't believe we're telling you anything that's at all important". When I assured him he was, he remarked: "Bear in mind that we're not particularly gay orientated". On another occasion Basil also suggested that he and his husband are "in most senses... not actively gay people – we're not on the scene" (interview 30 March 2011).

Therefore with these few qualifying words, Basil relates sexual identity with more public spaces – "the scene". With a history of largely no choice but to find partners in these non-domestic spaces it is not surprising that this older partnered person does not see home as an important place where sexuality plays out (even though it *is* one of the primary sites).

An additional transcript shows that bringing items into the home that are generally seen as material culture belonging to commercialised public spaces is anathema. Gary and Jack explain:

Gary: We try to avoid erotic [objects], anything rainbow 'flag-esque' or anything particularly gay. We like going out on the gay scene but I wouldn't bring the gay scene and stereotypes into my home.

Jack: Yeah, there isn't any need for that. ... To be honest, say a workman came to the flat, and all of that was on display, I would feel embarrassed and I would take it down before he comes in, so we don't put it up in the first place.

Gary: I did it when I was a student. My first property used to have all of those gay things around, but as I've grown I started to realise that the gay thing isn't the most important thing in your house and in your lives. You don't want it in your face every day. *The whole thing about equality is that you don't want to be singled out as being different and those are the things that actually make you different* (interview 16 January 2011; emphasis added).

Jack: I wouldn't wear a sticker on me [that says "I'm gay"] and that's why I wouldn't have those things in my house.

It is clear for this couple that equality means not needing to visibly identify one's gay self even in the home. Thus this homemaking approach that aims to make the space appear to be 'naturally' heterosexual, but ultimately inhabited by a married, gay male couple, works to queer heteronormativity. By observing that his gayness is not "the most important thing in your house and in your lives", this quote by Gary suggests that his gay sexuality is a normalised part of his subjectivity, and not that exceptional – which can further explain why there is no need to visibly identify with its gay-identifying accoutrements in the home.

James offers one example of an interviewee who aims to normalise his gay identity by suggesting it is mundane and not the singular factor in his identity. When asked if his furniture or the layout of his house in anyway might reflect his sexual identity he answered: "It reflects my personality. My identity is gay, but I have many others. It's not just that my gayness informs 100% of who I am." And later on he explained the naturalness to which his sexual identity is negotiated, particularly in reference to his partner coming to his flat: "People are very inclusive, they never actually mention it. We deal with the thing very naturally. We don't care; we're not making a big issue of it" (interview 13 April 2011). Similarly, speaking about his sexuality and his neighbours, Darrell observed that "it's no big deal" (interview 24 March 2011). Two further interviewees, Gerard and Ritchie also touched on this topic. Gerard had a decorator in to paint his flat not long before our interview and recalling that experience he notes the degree to which queer sexuality is naturalised into everyday interaction:

The person who came to decorate my flat (the person I would get closest to), it would be quite interesting to ask him [if he knew I am gay]. Probably if you said to him "did you know?" he would say "well I didn't think about it,

but of course”, you know, single man living on his own in a flat. People these days would start from the premise that they were gay.

And similarly, discussing his neighbours’ knowledge of his sexuality he believes they probably do not even think about it: “Do they know? Do they care? They probably have their suspicions... I suspect they would probably be surprised that you’re asking the question but they would probably say “oh yes” ”(interview 10 February 2011). Ritchie offered a likewise opinion by stating, “I think people are less curious than we think” (interview 7 February 2011). While these responses make queer sexuality seem ordinary and widely-accepted – and indeed it may be in the lives of some Londoners – it is important to note the geographical specificity of these comments. It is entirely feasible (and probable) that living in a large ‘Western’ metropolis like London allows this sort of take to sexuality, but of course rural, suburban and ‘non-Western’ LGBTQ people would certainly elicit different responses.

By drawing attention to these quotes that show how some older LGBTQ people do not raise their sexual identity to anything out of the ordinary I want to underscore the specificity of the project – the participant sample does not allow me to suggest this is representative of all older views. Moreover, as a result of mentioning that other intersections of identity are more important, I touch on a theme that Pugh discusses in one of his literature reviews. He argues that when looking at existing geographical texts on older people’s experience of home, “the message is quite clear, that happiness or satisfaction in later life is dependent on other factors rather than on sexual orientation *per se*” (Pugh 2002: 170). So far this section has shown that certainly for some older people in this study, other factors beyond sexuality are important in the homemaking process. This point is reinforced in Cook’s conclusion of queer domesticity as well:

I argue that the way these various men made home was as much about the street or area where they found a place to live, as much about their proximity to or distance from family, about the money they had and the job they did, about their understandings of identity, about their relationship status, health, and age... queerness in itself was not necessarily the decisive factor in the way they organised and made their homes and felt themselves to be ‘at home’ in London (Cook forthcoming c.4–5).

As a result of all these factors, how comfortable one is in one’s sexuality directly relates to the ability to reject publicised material culture, which was frequently abhorred in the preceding quotes. I acknowledge, however, that although this offers a snapshot of a small select group of queer Londoners’ experiences of home, this

cannot be read as entirely representative of the collective older LGBTQ community. It takes a certain amount of self-acceptance to even respond to my call for participants and many older queer people are not out. On the one hand this may mean these people might be more apt to hide visibly identifiable objects, but on the other hand the importance of material culture may offer the only link to the community they belong to.

Along with comfort in minority subjectivity, one other identity trait, also mentioned by Cook, was common among older participants when discussing the homemaking process: economic stability. Many older interviewees spoke of their home as an asset, and perhaps not surprisingly, the interviews with younger people did not raise this issue. Many in the younger group were finishing university and about to start looking for work, some were planning a family and others were thinking about buying their first home; therefore while the younger research participants spoke in terms of dreams, aspirations and the future, some of the older ones thought of their home in terms of a stable economic asset that attests to their financial well-being and success. In making this argument I note the specificity from which I draw my interviews: thirteen out of the eighteen interviews that have informed this chapter are with home owners; and from those interviews with participants over the age of 50 only three are renting their home now; put another way, 77 per cent of interviewees over 50 years of age own their own home (appendix D outlines specific socio-economic as well as other statistical information gathered from each interview). It is difficult (and doubtful) to suggest that this ratio is indicative of older LGBTQ society more generally, but with such a high proportion of older home owners in this study I argue that home ownership and financial status is one avenue that needs to be explored in a study that looks at homemaking.

Peter speaks to the economic stability home can have for older people. When asked what home means to him he answered: “Home also constitutes security in the wider sense of constituting my main asset and a sanctuary to which to retreat should the going ever get tough out there” (participant writing diary). And in our interview Peter remarked, “It’s my security; it is my asset – it means a hell of a lot really” (interview 9 March 2011). Jason also talked about home ownership. He commented that he has not found a house that he can call home yet, and part of this is because he has not owned yet; as a result of his tenure type – living in subsidised housing through an association – he is continually reminded of his own temporality. Jason notes: “For me there is also a level of ownership (property). I don’t have a problem

with renting but to have that sense of stability and security is important” (interview 8 January 2011). The degree to which the meaning of home is integrated into monetary value echoes a finding made by sociologists Ann Dupuis and David Thorns. In their study of older New Zealanders, they found that “respondents referred to both the economic aspect of ownership and the cultural norms associated with it in more or less the same breath”. These scholars posit there are multiple cultural and economic issues at work in New Zealand, including the desire to achieve security through home ownership – not just financial security, but also physical security that cannot be taken away, and security that offspring will have tangible inheritance (Dupuis and Thorns 1996: 486, 487). Dupuis and Thorns looked only to heterosexual couples with children, therefore there are clear differences in the two studies given that many of the respondents in this study do not have children to bequeath home to. Out of the interviewees that have informed this chapter, only four had children – Janice and Sarah, a lesbian couple in their late 30s/mid 40s, Janet in her mid-40s and Margaret in her late-60s (both transgendered). This fact also substantiates Basil’s claim made earlier in this chapter that when these older gay men were younger they did not have the option to have children. Both transgender women had previously been fathers in a heterosexual relationship (Janice and Sarah did not disclose the avenue through which they were able to become parents).

Nevertheless, with these few excerpts it is evident that home for these participants is understood in terms of its economic value, but looking at a few additional transcripts shows a unique trend in relation to homemaking processes and economics: that some older gay men imagine their homes to be ‘complete’ – thanks in part to their financial success. To use Dupuis’s and Thorns’s phrase, in the same breath that Peter mentioned the financial side to home he also noted the completeness of his home:

It is my base. It is my security. It is my asset. It means a hell of a lot really. We’ve got a home as we like it and it’s a great place to spend quite a lot of time (interview 9 March 2011).

Darrell also spoke about his home being complete: “If I wanted to change something I would have changed it. I can afford it and I have the time to think about it” (interview 24 March 2011). Similarly Basil felt that, “My home probably reflects a certain financial success that we didn’t have when I was growing up; although we were well off, I’m better off”. He commented that he and his partner would change “nothing”, as it is already the way they want it (interview 30 March 2011). And finally, Gerard suggests, “I think I’ve got to the stage where if I wanted to change

something I would and I could. If I wanted a new look I would go out and get it” (interview 10 February 2011). Many scholars have argued that homemaking, like identity, is an on-going process shaped by a range of evolving factors (Blunt and Dowling 2006; Gorman-Murray 2006a: 25) and indeed many interviewees suggest the accumulation of things is an on-going process, yet these quotes are interesting because they show that for a few older gay men homemaking is, at least on the surface, about an established contentment with what one *has* – contrary to the on-going nature of processes – thanks in large part to financial stability. While other aspects of homemaking can be understood as processes, it seems on some levels a few of these interviewees do not imagine their home in this way.

This section has looked at comfort in sexuality and also economic stability to uncover homemaking experiences, which has constructed an image of homes belonging to older LGBTQ Londoners, spaces that in many ways look just like any other home in London. The combination of living arrangements as well as factors that have contributed to many participants not explicitly relating to their sexual identity in the homemaking process relates to my discussion back in chapter two. I would argue that contrary to the exclusive gay domestic aesthetic that can be found in academic spatialised research as well as more widespread, the vast majority of homes in this chapter – and thesis, for that matter – queer this representation. Simply put, one could assume that these participants – especially those who suggest sexuality is not that important in their daily lives – would reject, for instance, the retirement community of Boom for its extraordinary and uniquely identifiable gay domesticity as well as its outwardly stereotypical depictions of gay identity which are foregrounded in the renderings. I want to build on the representation of domesticity that the research has constructed so far, by turning now to the final piece of the chapter which highlights how lifestyle choices also work to queer heteronormativity at home.

For many older interviewees who are in a relationship, sharing a home with one’s partner seems to be the norm that, some suggest, almost fits in with the nuclear family ideology; however, some respondents felt their living situation queers representations of home. At the beginning of our interview Darrell noted that his living situation is “a bit tricky”, in that he is “mostly living with [his] partner except” that they each have their own houses. He explained that they never completely moved into one home because they did not want to ruin a good thing:

We're only about a mile apart. I think because... I've been with him for 28 years and when I met him I was nearly 40, and I think both of us at that time thought "looking at [Darrell's] reputation, it's possible that this won't work and why give up our own flats"? We both still have the same flats. I think we thought "well, why fuck up a good system?" As it started to work we thought "well this works well". When we've had enough of each other we go home... but that doesn't happen very often.

Given their unique living situation, I asked Darrell where home is to him, and he considered his partner's house home – even though he can feel like a guest at the same time – as well as his own property (interview 24 March 2011). James also maintains a separate home to his partner of fifteen years, although five years ago they used to live together.

I asked every interviewee if they agree with this statement: "typically speaking, when society thinks of home images of the suburban, nuclear family with a father, mother and a couple of children come to mind". Some interviews felt this still exists. For example, Basil notes "I'm afraid I do agree with that. Sadly I think that's still the case, largely" (interview 30 March 2011). But others challenged this representation, at least at first. James states:

I don't think it's like that anymore. I think mentality is changing. But the stereotype is still there: the idea of family is a productive, nuclear group, with a father that works, and a mother that does stuff in the house and raises kids.

James feels that his home, like many other contemporary homes, is working to break down the stereotype which is beginning to change, but ultimately still exists. The way he suggests he does this is by living on his own in a block of flats in central London:

[My home] doesn't fit at all [into that idea of home]. Some people are surprised that I do my own cooking or cleaning. Well obviously; I'm gay and I live on my own I have to do all that stuff myself (interview 13 April 2011).

Returning to the idea that James brought up, that he is breaking down the stereotype in his process of queering heteronormativity, I suggest other interviewees also align with this view. Peter, for instance, feels that the home he shares with his partner in south London does not fit into the nuclear family ideology, but that "it's more typical of a twenty-first century view of what constitutes home". Peter believes that his home challenges that idea, but so too do other contemporary living arrangements:

I think there's recognition of more things on TV/media that it is a diverse world. And in fact, I suppose there's probably more single person households around, a hell of a lot of pensioners, also couples on their own.

So I think that people would see that as a bit more of a cliché from the 1970s sitcoms and things, and actually when they stop and think about it would realise that home is completely different from that now (interview 9 March 2011).

Jack and Gary feel that most people still have the nuclear family in mind when they imagine home, but, like Peter suggested, when one digs deeper actual living arrangements are diverse (interview 16 January 2011; see chapter two).

Devin suggests that because he lives alone he “fit[s] into an increasing picture of UK domesticity”. In other words, “there is a move away from the traditional 2.2 with the dog and the cat” (interview 9 January 2011). Gerard offers a similar opinion. In response to my question which asked if he felt that society has nuclear family ideologies of home in mind, he responded with:

Certainly not in my knowledge of home or any of my friends or anyone I know. There are very few people that live like that. I’ve got a couple of very good heterosexual friends and the ones I see regularly they don’t have children so they immediately go against the nuclear family. And my other friends who have children are a lesbian couple so that’s certainly not a nuclear family. I know what you mean but I think if you start digging around it’s a very different from the kind of experience that I would have or the people I know.

On the one hand Gerard feels his homemaking practices queer the nuclear family ideology, but on the other his single living situation is unique among older gay people:

I’m single and always have been I’m slightly different from most people that I know. I’ve got a couple of friends who are single and always have been but the majority of our friends have always had some kind of family relationship (interview 10 February 2011).

Both single and coupled older LGBTQ people queer heteronormativity through their living situations, but some interviewees note that their home life might even support ideal representations of home. Dale, for instance, agrees with the prevailing view that this ideology is changing: “it was probably the case when my parents were young”. However, he suggests, “[my home] probably does [support that ideology]! [We do not have] kids, but we live in what could be termed the suburbs, we garden, cook, and are quite domestic” (interview 20 January 2011). Along similar lines Dean remarked that his home fits into that picture, “in the sense of homeliness” (interview 18 February 2011). It emerged in our interview that Dean was incredibly house-proud, which he links to the larger ethos of home. These older LGBTQ interviewees who feel their version of domesticity might even support the societal representation of home complicate the queering of heteronormativity. This point

constitutes the deepest layer of my argument. In other words, the queering here is so subtle it remains essentially invisible unless read in terms of the occupants' minority subjectivity – which of course some feel is “not that important” in their identity construction and homemaking processes anyway (interview 4 February 2011).

Janet's living situation is interesting because she claims she fit into that model in the past – this is another example of the multiple ways sexuality can be experienced within and outside of heteronormativity, as discussed in the introduction – but now she sees her home as an extension of the heteronormative nuclear family. When Janet's three children were young she and her wife decided that it was the best time for her to transition from male to female: “I think one of the things that pushed me was that we perceived it getting harder as they were growing up”. Janet's story is captivating in that other than changing sex, her home and home life stayed very much the same: both her wife and house remained unchanged. She notes “it's a very unusual situation to be in; we've come through that and stuck together”. Although two females (one post-operative transgender) living in a small town just outside of London queers conventional heteronormativity in recognisable ways, when I asked her how her home fits into the representation of the nuclear family, surprisingly she felt it is not that far off:

I think most people do see that [ideal of home]. I think we see it slightly extended from that. We have the two of us, we have children, but we also have other people coming and going all the time. So home is not just the five of us, it's whoever we bring into that group. The children will have teenage friends come over a lot (particularly the oldest)... My mother, [my wife's] parent's they come and go quite freely as well. So it's no surprise if I come in one evening and there are six or seven people there (interview 16 May 2011).

Finally, Margaret queers heteronormativity at home in a similar way to Janet; as discussed above, she has lived in the same house both as a man and since her late 50s as a woman, as the patriarch in what may have appeared as a nuclear family household and now a single grandmother living alone. I asked Margaret if she agreed that the majority of society thinks of home as embodying the nuclear family ideology, and her answer not only challenges that statement but it also shows how she fits in:

Margaret: Well that's the advertising jargon, nuclear sort of families they advertise on TV. It's not true though: only 10% live that way, 90% don't. So it's just a pretty illusion. Most people now are single, living on their own. The idea of a wife, husband and a few kids is quite unusual around here [the place of our interview in central London]. Well it's not unusual where I live

[outside of central London]; even so, it's not everyone. Most people are in flats, single people, or old couples living by themselves, kids have left.

Brent: In the past did you fit into that model?

Margaret: Oh yes, I would say so. When I got married we had five kids, there were seven of us in the house. We lived a very conventional lifestyle. No one knew about me whatsoever. The kids went to ordinary schools, my wife was a housewife. Very conventional family; so I lived a very conventional life for a very long time. It was alright, I could cope with it. It's a bit constraining at times. You're always working for the kids: that's the point (interview 20 April 2011).

In our interview in April 2011 Margaret felt on the one hand her transgender identity makes her life "quite revolutionary really", but she felt she lives quite a conventional life. And in August 2012 she had the chance to reflect on her homemaking in greater depth and lucidly expanded on the latter point. I invited Margaret to show images and speak about her home life at *The Sundown Schoolhouse of Queer Home Economics* event I co-organised in June 2012 (discussed in the concluding chapter). I enquired if she would be willing to reflect on her experience so we could include it in the subsequent publication (currently in manuscript form); this is a condensed version of her response:

Recently I had the opportunity of taking part in an event at the Hayward Gallery on London's Southbank concerning the concept of queer home economics by which I understood this referred to how LGBT[s] lived their lives at home and what their daily existence centred around... I must admit that [taking part in this] I felt that I was being slightly fraudulent: I consider my own 'queer domesticity' not radical or subversive but 'normal'. Additionally, most trans. people I know find life at home and in public really difficult. Most people I know complain about how they feel discriminated from the NHS [(National Health Service)], and in employment and family relationships. In my case nothing could be further than the truth. I live now totally as a woman who is a perfectly respectable middle-aged, middle-class person living in a middle-class suburb in east London. I am fully accepted by people in the neighbourhood, where I am the neighbourhood watch co-ordinator for my street, and so often talk to all my neighbours. I have many friends, and go about socially all over London (email communication 16 August 2012; emphasis added).³⁴

The degree to which Margaret feels her domesticity is not extraordinary is highlighted when she lists some of her quotidian routine events:

At home I lead a very conventional existence, getting up, most days, around 6.30am, have a roll or two pieces of toast and a cup of tea for breakfast, check the breakfast news on TV, check my emails, get lunch prepared, get washed and usually go shopping at Asda, or Sainsbury's. After lunch I normally catch the tube into town, visit art galleries and museums. Most

³⁴ Margaret was happy for me to include this in my research (email communication 16 August 2012).

weeks I meet friends in town and we dine in a friendly restaurant near Oxford Circus. Except for clubbing on Saturday nights, I am usually in bed by 10.30pm (email communication 16 August 2012).

I include this detailed and lengthy write-up because of its richness: it shows that in many ways Margaret's lifestyle was and still is very conventional (except perhaps clubbing on a Saturday night). Her narrative, like others' discussed above, illuminates one of many complex ways in which older LGBTQ Londoners work to queer heteronormativity at home.

Conclusion

Setting up the chapter in two distinct sections, the first which looked at material objects and the second which looked beyond materiality, largely to lifestyles and living situations, has allowed for engagement with two main themes from the interview transcripts. However, in offering a conclusion to the chapter I must add a caveat to its structure. Although this dual approach allowed for underlying themes to come out within each – including the contextualising relationship between a history of oppression, homemaking experiences and one's material possessions, as well as the role varying intersections of identity beyond sexuality have in the process of experiencing home – it was not my intention to present a basic binaristic view. Rather, in this chapter, through the lenses of materiality and non-materiality, I have shown the varied and heterogeneous ways that older LGBTQ Londoners' identity is constructed at home. Moreover, I have argued that this age cohort simultaneously reject, challenge, and even aim to support through homemaking practices (at least on the surface), heteronormative ideals. Thus older LGBTQ Londoners in particular show that queering heteronormativity at home is a subversive act, but not always one that is easy to recognise. Presenting the transcripts in a way that allowed older LGBTQ Londoners' subjective experiences of home to play out, in this chapter I aimed to showcase the diversity with which LGBTQ Londoners' homes become a site of queer resistance to heteronormativity. In that this chapter and the preceding one have investigated the ways in which specific age cohorts in London queer heteronormativity at home, I move now to the third and final empirical chapter. In doing so, I shift focus to look at the urban phenomenon of the 'gay plumber', whose narratives help offer a secondary if limited look at LGBTQ domesticity in London.

Chapter 5

The Gay Plumber: Domestic Tradespeople Queering Home

Introduction

This final empirical chapter further explores the queering of heteronormativity at home in London by focusing on the phenomenon of the ‘gay plumber’ – or lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender domestic tradesperson who solicits custom from sexual minorities. The chapter is organised into two sections, and although each takes a separate focus they share overlapping themes. I begin by unpacking this largely urban domestic labour phenomenon to find out why these domestic services are being used (or avoided). Along with looking to interviews conducted with home owners and renters, I also draw from interviews that took place with ten tradespeople currently working in London. This allows me to look at the themes of politics of visibility, homophobic discrimination – which seems to be one of the main reasons why there is a demand for these services – and desire to display one’s sexuality through objects at home.

After contextualising the LGBTQ domestic trade network I argue that tradespeople such as the gay plumber *embody* the queering of heteronormativity at home, specifically by queering heteronormative domestic labour and construction trades. In making this argument I acknowledge a caveat with regards to the methodologies this chapter relies on. I had hoped that the ten interviews with domestic tradespeople would illuminate a secondary (and perhaps more complete) representation of the LGBTQ home in London – in that these people hold an insider status, seeing what no researcher could see – but this was not the case. Finally, I show that this investigation had the unexpected advantage of filling a lacuna in studies of domestic labour by adding the overlooked framework of sexuality to themes that have been widely explored in this literature, including gender, class and race differences. In so doing I observe that while the existing frameworks used in studies of domestic labour draw distinction between groups, sexuality, at least on the surface, creates community rather than divides it. But as the data from the interviews with home occupants suggests, when it comes to the usefulness of a domestic service where sexuality is foregrounded, it is difficult to offer generalisations.

In the second section I switch focus from looking at this domestic trade network to analysing the narratives and experiences of ten tradespeople. In other words, I investigate the essentially unmediated domestic spaces they visit. The section continues with the theme of politics of visibility and looks closely at domestic objects in the home. I suggest these transcripts support one side of the

larger argument of the thesis, specifically by offering unsurprising representations of domesticity.

A queer domestic trade network

In the back of London LGBTQ press magazines, such as *Boyz*, *g3* and *QX*, just before the advertisements for escorts and sex services, is a page devoted to gay classifieds. Here one can find a variety of advertisements including postings for jobs and domestic services such as computer repair engineers, handy-people, plumbers and movers (Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1 – The ‘small ads’ found in the back of Boyz magazine.

If the service one is looking for cannot be found in the free press, or in other LGBTQ magazines, the gay business website gaytoz.co.uk includes over 250 entries for tradespeople located largely in London but also across the UK (see *GaytoZ Search and Find*). The fact that many of these services are located in and aimed at London is not insignificant. The connection between the city/metropolis and queer culture has been the focus of much scholarly work – two notable sources are historian Robert Aldrich’s “Homosexuality and the City” (2004) and Abraham’s *Metropolitan Lovers* (2008). I previously touched on this theme in chapter three by noting the relationship between the coming-out narratives of younger LGBTQ interviewees and the migration to urban centres away from the (frequently non-urban) family home. Economist Alan Collins suggests that the existence of LGBTQ services can be understood in terms of a critical mass of gay and lesbian people in a large urban area:

With the growth of new urban sub-centres and with a constant or increasing percentage of lesbian/gay male households, there must exist a critical mass... at a particular population/city size that is sufficient to foster and sustain higher-order gay amenities such as gay nightclubs, gay hotels, gay gyms and gay sauna/health clubs. This causes ‘secondary explosions’ as businesses form or move to the location (gay plumbers, gay carpenters, gay cleaners, gay accountants, gay law practices, *etc.*) (Collins 2004a: 1792).

One of the research participants, Janet, – who lives in a small village near London and commutes in daily – notes that she would probably use these services but with only two plumbers in the village she does not have the option (interview 16 May 2011). Thus her opinion substantiates Collins’s claim that a critical mass of LGBTQ people is needed to support these secondary services.

When conducting a preliminary literature review for this chapter I was surprised to find that Collins’s study remains, to my knowledge, the only source to discuss this domestic queer trade network – albeit briefly. This is surprising considering that research on the ‘pink pound’ or ‘pink dollar’ does exist (Hennessy 2000; Badgett 2001; Brown 2009). Much of this literature agrees that in fact the pink economy, as a concept, is flawed. Bell and Binnie (2000: 144) have argued “that the utopian promise of the pink economy is a myth which hides economic inequality”. Others have shown that media coverage of pink economies tends to “stereotyp[e] gay men as affluent middle class consumers ... as exceptional and somehow operating outside of normal economic cycles” (Andersson 2008: 92). And Dines (2006: 136) shows that this discourse is taken up by the homophobic right to argue that the gay community is actually a privileged affluent group and therefore further legal reform is unnecessary. This body of work clearly focuses on overturning the notion of a

stereotyped affluent LGBTQ community; however, despite this valid argument, these businesses *do* exist and some, although not all, Londoners are using them within their homes. In the interview transcripts with home owners and renters, middle-class consumers tend to be the main demographic employing these tradespeople, however participants from across the socio-economic spectrum find the idea of a gay plumber useful.

To the majority of heterosexual consumers it might be surprising that these services exist and for some it might be strange to think that LGBTQ households would prefer to patronise a tradesperson with a similar sexual identity. A few interviewees were also surprised to learn about LGBTQ tradespeople – prior to starting this research project, I was also unaware of these services. Rachel, for instance, commented that she “didn’t know that they existed” but she would definitely use them (interview 24 January 2011). In contextualising this trade network, I aim to answer the following question: why would non-heterosexuals use a gay plumber or any other domestic service where sexuality is foregrounded? The interview transcripts show that the answer is twofold, and both reasons are brought up in Collins’s study: on the one hand, he suggests, “it may be gay community camaraderie”, but on other “there [might] also be more functional possible reasons relating to deliberately minimising the likelihood of encountering homophob[ia]” (Collins 2004a: 1792).

Jerry is one interviewee who speaks to the notion of helping fellow LGBTQ people because of common life experiences: “[using a LGBTQ tradesperson is] not necessarily a prerequisite, although I would like to support other gay people because God knows we have enough struggles in life at times” (interview 25 January 2011). Sally also suggested “it’s almost peer support” (interview 4 April 2011). And Janice thought she might use a gay tradesperson because “the gay world tends to look after itself” (interview 17 February 2011). After noting that the only place he sees advertisements for plumbers is in *Boyz*, Maurice also suggested that he would “give the gay guy a job”, thus aligning with the preceding quotes (interview 1 April 2011). Research participant Sharon would hire a LGBTQ tradesperson for the same reason she took time out of her schedule to meet with me: to help out the community she belongs to. She believes: “it’s a case of ‘support your sheriff’, which basically means support the people who are local to you... Like, for example this interview: I had no problem helping you out” (interview 10 May 2011). Handyman Carl felt that

“keeping it in the family” was one of the main reasons that there is a market for his services: he notes,

people would rather give the work to a gay person because they see themselves as a minority. I know a guy that works for a large company and organises a project, he might be gay but very few other people are *so he hires me to keep it solely in the family* (interview 30 July 2011).

Finally, in the interview with lesbian carpenter Julie she offers a very similar comment to Carl by suggesting that a client recently said “we’re keeping it in the family... [and clients have] said “we really want to make sure that we’re supporting our community” ” (interview 11 August 2011). I return to the notion of “keeping it in the family”, solidarity and camaraderie towards the end of this section when looking at the contribution a sexuality-based study could offer to studies of domestic labour.

Avoiding homophobic hate crime, the second justification that someone might use this service, is an extension of camaraderie. Michael and Bradley, a married couple in their late-twenties, actively patronise LGBTQ friendly services in an effort to avoid inadvertently supporting a company that is homophobic. When asked if they would use a service such as a gay plumber they noted:

Michael: Absolutely. Definitely, yes... I am very *very* aggressively in favour of economic positive discrimination when it comes to services because... [(Bradley finishes the sentence)]

Bradley: It’s making absolutely certain our money isn’t going to people who could be bigots.

Michael: Exactly. I don’t want to tip a cab driver and then [have him] donate it to a cause that goes against my interest. Until I’m certain that the vast majority of people do not work against my interest, I will be very careful how I spend my money... When we move I would definitely go for the ‘three poofs in a van’. I’d like to have a cab driver that we call on all the time, and I’d probably want a gay cab driver. Our lawyer [and] our accountant is from a gay business directory.

Bradley: Any business that actively courts gay custom should qualify because they’ve demonstrated that they’re comfortable and welcome gay clients. I don’t think our cab driver has to be gay (interview 11 June 2011).

The approach Bradley and Michael take is a response to a society in which homophobia is deep rooted.

A history of homophobic laws, attitudes and violence has forced sexual minorities to band together in many ways, including hiring LGBTQ domestic services. As outlined in earlier chapters, the socio-political oppression found in the public domain reinforced the domestic environment as a safe space. In chapter four I introduced two major events that wrote homophobia into public discourse: the AIDS crisis beginning from the 1980s, and the 1988 law, Section 28. Journalist Hugh David argues that the protests that were a result of both the latter homophobic law

and the lack of initial governmental support in response to AIDS – which was believed to be a gay disease at first – as well as wider discrimination for those affected by the disease, brought the community together. The fact that one can find LGBTQ tradespersons and “the flourishing [of] gay businesses...” is, David suggests, “an indirect result of the emergence in the mid-Eighties of a new homosexual solidarity” (David 1992). Again, I return to the notion of solidarity below when I show that this aspect offers a unique contribution to the existing body of literature on paid domestic labour.

Remembering what it was like setting up England’s first all gay construction company, founding partner Dwayne notes that one of the reasons he decided to work in the business was because gay men felt unsafe in their homes: “[I was approached by celebrities that I worked with and they asked] if I knew anybody that would work in their homes because at that time gay men were very nervous about being around straight builders, for safety reasons” (interview 27 July 2011). Additionally, my interview with Brenda, who has been in the business for 25 years, offers a snapshot of what it was like working as a lesbian painter and decorator in the late 1980s/early 1990s and the caution that LGBTQ people had to exercise even in the home.

Highlighting the changes in society Brenda asserts:

I think maybe when I first started there was a difference [between working in LGBTQ households versus straight ones]; because it’s so much easier and much more acceptable to be gay now... If you have somebody come into your home and they create a stink because you’re gay then there are laws to protect you from that. I think when I first started out at the end of the 80s/early 90s people preferred to have gay people working in their homes because it was just a little bit more secret really. A lot has changed over the last twenty years. There was more secrecy around it. The people I’ve worked for lately, there’s almost a brashness about having a straight builder come in and seeing how far you can push them with your sexuality, but that might just be the clients I’ve had lately. These friends of mine that I’ve worked for, they’ve had a builder come in and there was an element of seeing how far they could push the flirting before the builder got uncomfortable with it, whereas I think twenty years ago you wouldn’t have dreamt of doing that because it was a bit more scary [*sic*] in those days (interview 15 August 2011).

Devin also hinted at a change that has taken place with regards to homophobic abuse from tradespeople: “I suppose to a certain extent, given that nowadays you know who’s coming in, and the name of the tradespeople, they can’t say anything, not to your face, because you can report them”. When I asked Devin if he would mediate his identity when a stranger comes into the home he commented, “No I make no apologies for who I am; if they come in and see it and get very

uptight then I just tell them to ‘piss off’ ” (interview 9 January 2011). This wasn’t the only person that suggested he would not make concessions for a tradesperson, several of the younger interviewees agreed: “[If] I had a plumber come in I really couldn’t care less” (interview with Alison, 20 January 2011). Jackson felt that his older clients tended to live in “a gay bubble” and the fact that they hired him contributed to this; thus he suggested that the younger ones who have confronted their sexuality more recently might have less of a need to employ LGBTQ tradespeople in an effort to avoid homophobic abuse in the home. Certainly for Maurice, who lives with his husband in their co-owned flat in south London, the fact that he came out more recently than his partner means that Maurice is less likely to care what people think. Talking about how his husband recently cleared out their home so there were few signs that it was gay owned, in order to increase the chances of the property selling, Maurice notes:

[My husband] came out much earlier than me, when he was eighteen. So I think he has experienced homophobia more than I did. I came out ten years ago; we still live in a hetero-centric world, but I’ve never experienced really overt homophobia whereas he did. It was in the late ‘80s so it was a very different time. So that’s still in his psyche and he still thinks what people will think. Whereas I’m like ‘*Fuck ‘em!*’ (interview 1 April 2011).

Despite the transition that has taken place that the above quotes suggest, outlined in greater detail in previous chapters (particularly the introduction), homophobia at home still exists, and the fact remains that many people, like Maurice’s husband, still fear retaliation in their domestic space. Evidence that one may choose a LGBTQ service over a straight competitor in an effort to avoid violence can be supported by research produced by equality organisation Stonewall. In 2010 Stonewall surveyed 1050 heterosexuals and 1036 lesbian, gay and bisexual people over the age of 55 across Britain to look at a range of issues and experiences affecting perception and reality of ageing and compared the data across sexual identities. In their report they outline:

One in four (25 per cent) lesbian, gay and bisexual people have experienced discrimination, hostility or poor treatment from tradespeople and other service providers because of their sexual orientation – more than half (55 per cent) of these incidences occurred within the last five years. (Stonewall 2011: 21)

Using these services to avoid homophobia was brought up in several interviews from both home occupiers as well as LGBTQ tradespeople. Lesbian carpenter Julie put herself in the position of her clients by commenting “if I was employing somebody

to come into my house... it's quite nice to know that they're similar minded and that you're not going to get any shit" (interview 11 August 2011).

As a heteronormatively masculine sector, the trades have been known as a bastion of homophobia. Gay handyman Carl is one tradesperson who spoke to the negative attitudes towards gay people that exists in the construction industry:

Oh yes [it is homophobic]; well working-class England is generally homophobic... I've heard some horrific stories of people who have come in and seen a picture of two guys together and said nasty things... I've met a few quite extreme working-class bigots [who say things like] "*fucking queers*" (interview 30 July 2011).

Brenda also mentioned the desire to avoid homophobia:

Inviting somebody into your home is quite a personal thing really, you don't want anyone in there who might be making judgements and going off saying "those bloody poofs, watch your back all the time"; which I have heard. I work for a guy in Hertford who is gay, he was having a lot of building work done, they were nice guys but you could tell they were like "I don't want to be alone here with him" (interview 15 August 2011).

Additionally Dwayne spoke about the homophobia that exists in construction industry by comparing it to sport, which is widely known to be an unsafe environment for out gay people: "There have been occasions when companies or people have engaged our services and then realised retrospectively that we're a gay friendly company. We've had a couple of problems with that; the building industry is like football" (interview 27 July 2011).³⁵

Adam shared his experience of using a gay computer engineer to fix his desktop computer and one of the main reasons he did so was to avoid the judgement that is part of homophobic hate crime: "a gay computer person wouldn't be so upset about some of the things I've looked at on my computer" (interview 31 March 2011). Similarly, Gerard recalled getting a quote from a gay carpenter to renovate his kitchen. Although he did not hire him due to other reasons, he commented that "it seemed like a good idea: when people come into your home it's nice to think they're not going to judge you" (interview 10 February 2011).

Following on from Gerard's reasoning, transgender participant Kristen feels that she would use a LGBTQ tradesperson to ensure safety in her home, especially because she lives alone: "If I had a partner it would probably be different because I wouldn't need so much of the safeness, but on my own I want that safeness [*sic*]"

³⁵ Although there has not been, to my knowledge, widespread campaigns aimed at tackling homophobia in the construction industry or the domestic trades, changing the attitudes of sports players was the focus of UK Prime Minister David Cameron's second annual LGBTQ reception hosted at ten Downing Street on 22 June 2011 (Cameron 2011).

(interview 28 April 2011). A few other women also noted they would want to hire not explicitly a LGBTQ tradesperson, but a female one, for both safety reasons and to avoid the sexualised heterosexual male gaze. Sally, for example, commented that she would use a LGBTQ plumber,

and if it's a woman it's even better! I usually don't feel necessarily threatened by a heterosexual man in my house but I think that would also help, having someone that I know I don't have to worry about at home (interview 4 April 2011).

Seila similarly shared a desire to avoid uncomfortable heterosexual advances: "I would of course [use a LGBTQ contractor]. I would feel more confident. [In the past] it happened a few times, that the kitchen contractors (two men) were chasing us and judging us with their eyes; it was really uncomfortable" (interview 27 January 2011). The interview with carpenter Julie and her partner Carina also touched upon the theme of hiring female trades. When asked why she felt LGBTQ people might want to hire her over the straight competition, Julie remarked:

I think it makes them more comfortable. Especially the older lesbians I've worked for felt a lot more comfortable [knowing] that there was a woman [in their home]. I don't think it would necessarily be because I'm a lesbian... I guess it would be the same if I was a straight woman.

On the contrary, Carina felt that even though women are excited to hire a female tradesperson, when they find out she is lesbian it is even more positive news:

They get very excited that they've found a tradesperson that is female and gay... Women tend to feel more comfortable knowing a female is coming into the home in many cases, and you've got the fact that they're also LGBT, which is quite exciting (11 August 2011).

Although there have been changes in policy, there is still more needed on the social front: LGBTQ people still have to hide their identity to varying degrees, whether in employment, walking down the street or in the privacy of their own homes. And given that home is an important site in which one can feel safe and comfortable, the ability to display personal objects that relate to one's sexuality is, for some respondents, an important part of that. Many of the above quotes relate to the politics of visibility within the home which formed a part of the previous chapter: whether one can or cannot display personal objects is a pressing issue in the domestic spaces belonging to many sexual minorities. I return to look at the relationship between homophobia and the display of interior objects in more depth in the next section when I investigate the domestic spaces these tradespeople visit. Although many interviewees noted that they would use these services for the two reasons

discussed, others expressed reasons for avoiding this trade niche altogether, which are equally valuable in this contextualisation.

Two main themes emerged from the interview data explaining why this subculture would avoid using LGBTQ trades within their homes: sex and money. Regarding the former, Jerry offers a succinct view: “*Really?* A gay plumber? That’s actually how porn starts” (interview 25 January 2011). And he is not the only participant that equated sex with hiring a LGBTQ contractor. Ritchie, rather bluntly, also explained that he would not use a gay plumber because “unless you’re going to *fuck* the plumber what’s the point?”. He continued by asserting “you want a plumber that’s going to do the job! That’s all the stuff of fantasy, isn’t it?” (interview 7 February 2011). Alison also believed that this service has more to do with sex than anything else:

I wouldn’t really choose that [service]. I’d want a plumber who is good and can fix the thing. I don’t really need the plumber to be gay. If they are then great but that’s not the first thing I’m looking for in a plumber. I don’t really see the benefit, unless I intend to sleep with the plumber! (interview 20 January 2011).

These quotes suggest that, at least for some LGBTQ Londoners, one would only use these services to find sexual partners.

Regarding the second theme of money or cost that was prevalent in the interview data, Darrell had something to say. Although he employed a gay plumber in the past, he remarked that he would not use the service again because he assumed the trade person might want to charge more than the straight competition: “I think he thought he should be more highly rewarded because he was a gay person working for a gay man, and I thought “it doesn’t work like that, honey” (interview 24 March 2011). Another research participant that felt LGBTQ services might cost more is Hugo, who commented that “maybe” he would use this service but believed that,

Normally the things that are marketed toward gay people tend to be more expensive. So I would give it a thought, but I would have that perception, that everything that is ‘gay branded’ tends to be a bit more expensive (interview 12 April 2011).

And Margaret proposes that rather than actively seek out a LGBTQ tradesperson she would “go for the cheapest [because she is] tight with money” (interview 20 April 2011). Dale also brought up the issue of cost by suggesting that he “would rather go for a good... local plumber who did a good job at a good price”. Further, he “assume[s] you’d pay more for that” (interview 20 January 2011). Similarly, Mario commented that he “would want the best and the cheapest, my plumber doesn’t have

to be gay” (interview 27 April 2011). A quote from Roger also relates here for his insistence on quality and price being the bottom line:

If I was looking for quotes from people and I came across a gay plumber, yeah, I'd ask them in to give me a quote. But I wouldn't give them special preference just because they're a gay company. It's about quality and price, I don't care whether they're gay or straight, male or female (interview 27 April 2011).

Parker's reason for not wanting to use a gay plumber captures both themes of sex and money that the above quotes speak to, but it also touches on the issue of respectability that has been implicit to many of the comments made around the theme of sex. He notes, “there's the people that think “if I have a gay plumber come in then maybe I'll get something out of it” ” and the “something” is clearly sex. He continues by commenting “I don't like that; I think it's cheap” – an antonym of cheap in this instance being respectability. Finally his opinion also touches on the fact that this service might cost a premium: “I think this ‘LGBT’ label is sometimes also a licence to charge more” (interview 2 February 2011).

The above quotes begin to show that the views of the LGBTQ community are as diverse as its members. The fact that some people find the idea of a domestic gay plumber useful whether for camaraderie or avoiding homophobic violence, and yet others feel this trade niche is unnecessary because of impressions that the service is sexualised and over-priced, reinforces the need for understanding how stereotypes affect minority subjectivity generally and queer domestic spaces specifically. As a final piece of contextualisation, I want to investigate whether these services are, in fact, sexualised in nature and whether they cost more.

When asked if he charged more, less, or the same as the straight competition, gay electrician Randy answered “definitely less”. He finds charging by the hour is “fairer and... end[s] up giving a better deal, which means [he] get[s] hired back or [recommended] on to friends” (interview 9 June 2011). Many interviewees with tradespeople noted that their prices needed to be competitive in order to be successful in the business. Dwayne, managing director of a construction company, was one of them: “We're often competing against straight companies so I would say we're just the same, we're competitive; it's a competitive industry” (interview 27 July 2011). Similarly, Cory observes: “I'm very competitive and I get a lot of work because of it” (interview 27 July 2011). Lesbian carpenter Julie felt that she was competitive for reasons that implicitly relate to equality: “I'd charge the same. I wouldn't like to be charged more or less because I'm lesbian; I don't look at people in that sense, that I

can fix a figure with their sexuality” (interview 11 August 2011). Gay handyman Carl also noted he was competitive and hasn’t put up his prices in seven years (interview 30 July 2011). Actually in eight out of the ten interviews with domestic tradespeople it was noted that their pricing is competitive with the straight competition.

Gay cleaner Jackson, who no longer works in the business, was one of the few tradespeople that noted he charged a premium over similar services found in the straight community:

How I got that price was by calling up other cleaners and pretending I needed a cleaner and found out what others were charging. I wasn’t undercutting myself but still charging a fair price. A lot of other people were charging between six and eight pounds an hour. Ten pounds wasn’t that much to ask for... [from] gay clients... (interview 16 June 2011).

With this final qualifying sentence, Jackson seems to offer a quote that scholars working in the pink economy (discussed above) would suggest falsely presents all LGBTQ people operating outside of standard economical restrictions. Jackson admitted that he probably could not charge more now given the current economic hardship many households are facing. The other gay cleaner I interviewed substantiates this point: Marshall noted that he “used to charge ten pounds an hour” because “if someone wanted a gay cleaner they would pay more, but now [he] just charge[s] eight pounds an hour” (interview 28 July 2011). Along with Jackson only one other tradesperson noted that he charges more, and his pricing is based on the highly specialised service offered. Recognising that there is a niche market among gay men, Tommy offers domestic cleaning service with a twist: he does it nude. The interview with Tommy was intriguing for many reasons, not just because his service conflates a domestic chore with sexual desire. Nonetheless, the structure of our interview followed the same form as those with other LGBTQ tradespeople. When asked if he charged more, less, or the same for this specialised service, his answer was not surprising:

Oh no, definitely more! It would be eight pound an hour otherwise. People will phone me up and say “how much do you charge?” And I say “its 40 pounds an hour” and they go “oh my god, I can get a cleaner for ten pound an hour”. Yeah you can!... It spells it out: it’s a nude cleaner, a slightly different service.

One of the advantages of working in this field is that his clients have more money than most people looking for a cleaner: “It’s obvious they have more disposable income so are more willing to pay higher prices” (interview 27 July 2011).

As the above transcript excerpts have shown, a misconception exists around the cost of hiring a LGBTQ domestic tradesperson. Excluding Jackson, who worked in the early-2000s, a period in which he felt some people had more money to spend, and with the notable exception of a nude cleaner, the majority of interviewed domestic tradespeople are competitive with the straight market. I now consider if sex is something foregrounded in the homes LGBTQ tradespeople visit.

In short, yes it is: seven out of the ten interviews brought up sex. But the transcripts show that these tradespeople are not offering sexual services, rather they are propositioned by some customers. A few interviewees noted that people would receive sexual enquiries and prank calls. When asked if he had any stories that arose from working in LGBTQ Londoners' homes Randy shared the following:

Actually most of my interesting stories are before I even get hired. I used to get up to five texts a day from people that wanted to know if I would work naked, or shirtless; they had this fantasy of the electrician coming into their home and satisfying their needs. I used to get so many texts asking if I would send a picture of my dick. It became so bad that I actually had to call my service provider and have them block one person's number. I didn't actually do work for any of those people. It seems to have died down the last few years. I guess people can have that fantasy fulfilled on the internet or in other ways; there are people that will do that now... (interview 9 June 2011).

Dwayne noted having similar experiences but rather than text messages he receives phone calls:

Occasionally we have bizarre phone calls where people will call up and ask a silly question. I usually redirect them to a suitable website and tell them "you'd have much more fun looking there" rather than talking to me. They're crank calls when people try to engage in a dialogue with you about what you're wearing and if you're naked, "or can you come around and do something inappropriate" (interview 27 July 2011).

In addition, Carl commented that he receives phone calls of a sexual nature: "Some people might phone me up and ask me if I do extras. I might get one of those calls every three or four weeks. I get people that want to talk dirty on the phone." He attributed receiving these calls from advertising in *Boyz*; given that the classifieds are on a page adjacent to advertisements for phone sex, it might not come as a surprise.

Carl explains:

These people get the *Boyz* magazine and think everyone must be up for it. Some people are very promiscuous and they automatically assume if you're gay you're up for it and maybe they frequent saunas a lot and this is how they see the gay world, whereas this is not a true reflection (interview 30 July 2011).

Jackson remembers receiving phone calls asking if he would clean in the nude. One of these phone calls stuck in his memory:

There was one guy that wanted me to come clean a couple of rooms as a one-off job. And he said “would you do it nude?” And I don’t know what made me think of it, I guess I was just curious and asked how much he would pay me. He said he could pay me fifteen pounds an hour and I thought “I’m not going to strip for fifteen pounds an hour!” I declined (interview 16 June 2011).

Marshal, another cleaner I interviewed also commented that he received similar calls: “Some people aren’t wanting cleaning [*sic*] but they’re just looking for sex, but you get around that by being professional and you can usually weed those out from the initial call” (interview 28 July 2011). These quotes show that, at least for these interviewees, these tradespeople are professional in nature, and aim to avoid putting themselves in sexualised situations.

The interview transcripts are illuminating for pointing out what it is like working in some LGBTQ Londoners’ homes; moreover they substantiate the point that these tradespeople are visiting a privileged space, what Goffman calls the ‘backstage’ space (see chapter 1; Goffman 1990 [1959]: 231). Marshal is one of three gay tradesmen whose comments expand on this. He notes gay male clients have been known to take a shower whilst a contractor is in the home:

It’s not unusual when you’re cleaning for a gay man to [be] going about his business, getting out of the shower. These are the things that if you worked for a straight person would be abnormal, but they’re quite normal in a gay household... I don’t know what it is about most gay clients but they feel that having a shower while you’re around and walking from the bathroom to your bedroom without properly covering up is actually the norm with a gay cleaner. That happens a lot; it rarely *doesn’t* happen (interview 28 July 2011).

Given the issue of sexual identity has been established from the beginning – that is, the client hired a *gay* domestic worker – these people might be hoping for sex to come out of having the work done. Randy also shares a similar experience working in gay male homes. He observes:

[An interesting story] would have to be guys that go for a quick shower when I’m there and then walk around in their towel. If I was a straight electrician nobody in their right mind would do that, they would shower and be ready before I was due to come. I guess it’s that fantasy... and a bit of titillation. I’ve had people ask me when I come to do the free estimate how much extra is it for me to work topless or work naked. When I tell them the price, they can’t afford it (interview 9 June 2011).

And finally Jackson commented that a regular client “got really friendly [with him]... over the time I was working with him. It got to the point where if he was going to shower he would have no problem running to the bathroom in the nude. Jackson continues by noting that he became “very desensitised to the whole thing. That was just part of working with these people; it was something to chuckle about” (interview 16 June 2011). Following on from the experiences above, where people have showers or walk around in next to nothing whilst the contractor was in the house, Julia shared her annoyance having to wait for clients to finish having sex so she could get started on her work: “[An interesting story would be] turning up and people are having sex. Or fitting furniture and they were having sex. I was just waiting, having another coffee and getting slightly frustrated...” (interview 11 August 2011).

One might assume that Tommy might get propositioned for sex more often than the other LGBTQ tradespeople I interviewed, but when asked if this was the case, his answer was surprising: “Not really, actually”. He commented that it is usually established up front that the service is just cleaning (interview 27 July 2011). Finally, handyman Carl commented on the percentage of people that think the service is for sex: “I think maybe one in twenty might test the ground. And other people are blatantly obvious with their pants down... I’ve noticed as I get older I get into less of these situations” (interview 30 July 2011).

The above transcript excerpts have drawn from seven of the interviews to show that sex, through proposition or otherwise, is something that these LGBTQ tradespeople find themselves faced with on various occasions in their careers; thus although some LGBTQ Londoners might hope to get sex out of this service, it is not part of this domestic service. When asked if he had any experiences that stick out in his memory, Cory’s answer offers a captivating point to wrap up this discussion. Cory commented that he had no “sordid or juicy” stories to share and that his clients are “mostly... white, middle class, ‘average’ gay people” (interview 27 July 2011). For this interviewee, the types of people that can afford to hire a gay painter/decorator occupy a place in the social stratum that would not offer sex to a contractor. Thus, issues of class, and affluence can relate to appropriateness and normalised codes of what one can and cannot do when a tradesperson is in the home, at least for this particular tradesperson. Returning to a point I argued in chapter three and four, one could assume that Cory might also support the queering of heteronormativity through ‘normalising’ the queer home – in other words showing

that these spaces are not exceptional or peripheral – albeit this instance is fraught with race and class implications.

So far this first section has offered an account of the gay plumber domestic trade phenomenon and in so doing I have looked at why some Londoners use this service and why others avoid it. Through looking at this trade network I also begun to challenge interviewees' misunderstandings about the services these people provide as well as the price they charge. As I continue to argue in the next section, despite my original hopes when I embarked on a heretofore little-researched niche of domestic labour, the interview transcripts do not offer surprising or varied insights into LGBTQ Londoners' homes. Simply put, from the few transcripts with tradespeople drawn on thus far, sexuality remains foregrounded in the home in obvious ways and these home owners/renters might be understood as promiscuous and highly sexualised human beings; notions that exist in larger tropes of, at least, gay male identity. Thus the transcripts tend to show a monolithic representation of queer domesticity. Despite being a small sample, this complements the argument of the thesis that some LGBTQ people are queering heteronormativity at home in obvious ways. In other words, these interviewees show Londoners are queering domesticity in apparent, almost stereotypical, ways, which, so far, relates to the foregrounding of sex – but of course as I showed above not all LGBTQ households would find these services useful. Indeed, understanding the queer home requires multiple creative methodological approaches and this chapter is meant to complement the work of previous ones, which largely relied on semi-structured interviews with home owners/renters.

The LGBTQ tradespeople themselves, also, I would argue, queer heteronormativity in relatively easy to understand ways: through the embodiment of queer identity in the deeply heteronormative domain of paid domestic labour and construction trades. As suggested earlier, by foregrounding their service as LGBTQ, many of these tradespeople have had to carve a career in the face of discrimination, and although this has improved over the past two decades, as Carl suggests, in many ways working-class England remains homophobic (interview 30 July 2011). In addition, foregrounding interviewees' sexuality in this investigation offers a queering of heteronormative studies of paid domestic labour.

Work on implicitly heteronormative paid domestic labour has been well documented and looks at many eras in history within studies of home. It has aimed to challenge the invisibility of not only females in a patriarchal society but also, among

others, migratory workers in middle-upper class homes (Anderson 2000; Cox 2006). But in this expanding body of literature on domestic labour certain groups have been overlooked. Geographer Rosie Cox is one scholar that has recently sought to fill in the gender gap, specifically by looking to male and female domestic workers. Focusing on the franchise in New Zealand, “Hire a Hubby”, Cox argues gender issues are at play: female domestic work is constructed as unskilled and worthy of low pay, while for male handymen their training is gained in a similar “learn by doing” way, but yet these jobs are constructed as more skilled and deserving of higher pay (Cox: 2010; 2012a and 2012b). Sociologists Majella Kilkey and Diane Perrons are two additional scholars that have looked at issues of gender surrounding the handyman trades and in so doing argue that on the one hand recent research on men and work has positioned “men in the public sphere, and on the other hand, research on domestic labour usually treats this as exclusively women’s work” and as a result “we know very little about this group of workers” (Kilkey and Perrons 2010: 251). Leaving the gendered research aside, I extend this last point by suggesting that we know even less about LGBTQ domestic labourers who advertise *to* and are recruited to work *in* the homes of queer sexualities; thus a sexuality-based study could build on gendered studies of paid domestic labour.

Along with gender, class, ethnicity and race have formed key frameworks in the abundant work produced on paid domestic work (Gregson and Lowe 1994; Anderson 2000; and Treas and Drobic 2010). Despite this wide-reaching research, sexuality has been somewhat surprisingly overlooked. Focusing on sexuality, I would argue, not only addresses an elision in this research, it also provides a new lens to look at the role of paid domestic work in communities. In other words, the literature on gender, class and race in paid domestic work draws distinctions between communities – especially class and race-based differences – in that the workers do not belong to the same community as their employers, and in many cases the latter group’s employment of them highlights class and race distinctions *between* the two groups. However for LGBTQ domestic labourers, their work, in part, does the contrary: it actually helps *create* a community rather than *divide* communities. Earlier in this section I drew on interviews with LGBTQ home owners/renters who suggest that they would employ a gay plumber to keep it “in the family”, for community development. Three further quotes reinforce community building. For “solidarity reasons”, Betty believes that she would want “to support the community [she] belongs to” (interview 19 April 2011). Marshal felt “the advantages are that

you're working for your own community... quite often you can build up a friendship" (interview 28 July 2011). And electrician Randy realises that strong community ties work in his favour:

One of the reasons I work in gay homes is because it's a smaller pool of people and, like most tradespeople, I rely heavily on word of mouth. So the gay circle is easier to get around. I'd have to put in 1000s of pounds in advertising to even make a ripple in the straight electrician world. Yes, there are fewer customers in the gay pool, but, because word of mouth is so crucial, I find I can get more business this way (interview 9 June 2011).

Marshall also noted that "on *Gumtree* [(an online classified website)] there are tens of thousands of cleaners advertising, but if you narrow the search into 'gay cleaner' it increases people looking at your advert... [it] sticks you out from the rest" (interview 28 July 2011). And finally Julie similarly felt "it's quite a good selling point" (interview 11 August 2011).

Randy felt that one of the main differences between straight homes and gay homes is the amount of sociability that comes about from the desire to build community ties: the "gay homes I work in", he suggests, "are much more sociable. It's as if we're mates already before we even know each other. A gay customer will definitely start up a conversation more than a straight customer." He continues by claiming a unique difference exists in what is talked about between the two types of homes (which are admittedly generalised):

It's as if we don't get shocked so there's no need for polite chit chat. I can tell you right now that in straight homes they talk about the weather, and kids and college and university; those are the things straight people like to talk about – very safe topics so as not to offend.

Randy felt that the sociability that prevails is one of the advantages to working in a close-knit community:

The great thing about working in gay homes is that they will socialise with me far more. They'll... want to know where I socialise in town, who I know, if I have a boyfriend. They'll offer me tea or cakes. And that level of socialising only seems to happen because we know each other is gay (interview 9 June 2011).

Similarly, when asked about the advantages of working as a carpenter in LGBTQ homes Julie's partner Carina observed that:

Just because you happen to be LGBTQ yourself doesn't necessarily mean you have something in common with the person, but it means you're starting from equal points and you both understand that you might have been through a bit of difficulty at some point in your life.

Therefore, for Carina, the common life experience of coming out works as a leveller – in that the assumption of a shared difficult past is something to talk about and therefore makes both parties relaxed. She continues:

There's something about knowing that in the back of your mind, that you don't need to come out and they don't need to come out, you feel quite relaxed to start with. And I think that's quite nice, and you often get into conversations quite quickly with people about where they grew up, when they came out... there's that common ground to start off with, which is quite nice (interview 11 August 2011).

It is a relatively straightforward assertion that the sociability that comes through shared life experiences works to facilitate community building among LGBTQ tradespeople and the home occupiers who employ them. In suggesting that the building of community is unique to the LGBTQ trade network, I want to also acknowledge that one must be careful not to draw overall generalisations. On the one hand there are certainly class and race-based exclusions that can be found in the employment of LGBTQ domestic trades that cannot be overlooked – but, within a middle-class milieu, equity and solidarity seems to be a key issue, rather than the drawing of distinctions. And on the other hand, as the research shows, LGBTQ Londoners do not all share similar views; many interviewees do not find these services useful and therefore do not participate in this form of LGBTQ community building.

In this first half of the chapter one theme has remained constant which builds on the work of previous chapters: generalisations are difficult to make when it comes to LGBTQ subjectivities and home. Turning to the next section which looks in detail at the domestic space these tradespeople visit I want to keep this theme foregrounded. Despite presenting similar representations, of queer Londoners' domestic spaces, I argue LGBTQ tradespeople offer a specific, rather than generalised, view of the ways in which these residents are queering heteronormativity at home.

Looking at domestic space through rainbow-tinted glasses

Looking closely at the narratives of ten tradespeople, this section builds on a theme briefly touched on in the first half of the chapter: the politics of visibility. Allowing these narratives to speak, this section in particular presents what can be understood, at least on the surface, as a relatively homogenous view into queer London homes. As suggested previously, despite my hopes to utilise these interviews to gain a more complete representation, what follows builds on my argument that

Londoners are queering home. In many ways the below narratives show easy-to-understand ways in which this is done, for example through displaying sexualised objects. But even within these ten narratives it is difficult to draw generalisations. I also highlight contradictions when it comes to the politics of visibility in the homes LGBTQ tradespeople visit.

In the interviews with tradespeople the desire to avoid homophobic backlash in relation to displaying sexuality at home, whether through material possessions or coupled signifiers, such as shared bedrooms, within one's homespace was believed to be one of the main reasons a LGBTQ domestic trade network exists. Gay cleaner Marshal, for instance, suggested that "there may be X-rated material that people don't want to put away" (interview 28 July 2011). Jackson, another gay cleaner, also remarked that gay men hired his cleaning services because they did not want to hide objects in their home:

They really preferred to have a gay cleaner because it suited their lifestyle. They were of a certain generation (an older generation) and they didn't feel comfortable having porn and poppers [(a form of over-the-counter drug)] out for some female to see. They didn't want to hide who they were and it was a lot easier for them to have a gay cleaner who wasn't going to judge them... One of them actually explicitly said that he's at that age that he doesn't want to hide pornography and be embarrassed by things.

After moving on with his career, Jackson and his partner were in a position to hire a cleaner for their southeast London home and he was very much in favour of hiring a gay cleaner for the reason that he did not want to have to hide anything relating to his sexual identity (interview 16 June 2011).

Another tradesperson that felt LGBTQ Londoners would want to hire his service so they do not have to hide objects is gay painter/decorator Cory. He insists, "gay people are happy to have a gay tradesman in the house so they don't have to hide the gay porn or the dildos or the boyfriend or girlfriend... They don't need to take the pictures down." Cory felt that considering he is often left alone in the home to paint while the clients go off to work, putting an entire house full of objects away is not ideal (interview 27 July 2011). Similarly, talking about his construction company Dwayne mentioned that one of the reasons LGBTQ people patronise his company is because

They know that they're not going to have to conceal their home arrangements, their sleeping arrangements, and photos with their partners – anything that might give away their homosexuality. They can be very open and relaxed and who they are. That's why they come to us (interview 27 July 2011).

Already one can see similarities in the homes these tradespeople visit. In other words, the people who wish to foreground sexuality in the employment of domestic tradespeople are first and foremost very comfortable with their own minority identity and they wish to showcase it at home, some doing so in clear ways which relate to sex and desire while others do so in less explicit ways. From the interviews with tradespeople their narratives suggest there are a few telling interior design choices which can visibly identify a client's LGBTQ sexual subjectivity – outlining these allows for a deeper look at some issues affecting the politics of visibility – these include: artworks, whether paintings, statues or framed photographs; LGBTQ literature; items appropriated by the LGBTQ community; and other objects pertaining to sexual acts.

For the most part domestic trade interviewees focused on sexualised materiality; but I also want to look at the few transcripts that brought up non-sexualised objects at home. Jackson recalled seeing a “little souvenir [of a rainbow flag]” in one of the homes he visited, an emblem of LGBTQ identity and pride since it was first used in the United States in the late-1970s (Ferrigan 1989) (interview 16 June 2011). Tommy also observed seeing a rainbow flag in the bedroom of the client he visited prior to our meeting (interview 27 July 2011). On the contrary, which shows the differences in views even within this small group of tradespeople, Randy believes that although “there are many things that give away gay homes it would never be something like a rainbow flag, that’s too obvious and unnecessary” (interview 9 June 2011). This assertion relates to Randy’s main clientele: older gay men who have sufficient income to hire an electrician in the home one owns and heterosexual women. Excluding the heterosexual clientele for the moment (I return to this issue below) who would not have the same need to display a rainbow flag, it is possible that there are linkages between age, affluence and safety and the need or desire to display the rainbow flag in one’s home. Indeed in the interviews with older LGBTQ Londoners these items were thought to relate more to public gay culture and youth identity. Only one home belonging to an older interviewee displayed a rainbow flag. It is feasible that the wealthier one is, the easier it is to protect oneself against homophobic violence and design a home to suit that privilege. The interview with renter Jerry supports this. Jerry remarked that the rainbow flag was an important symbol to display when he was younger and in school but less so now that he has his own home. He notes:

I used to display it when I was seventeen to 22. I really like it, but now I just think I don't need to display it in my own home. I'm safe in my own home and I don't need to display gay pride to myself, that's what it means to me, you know "gays are here, gay is fine". My entire house means that (interview 25 January 2011).

Continuing to look at trade interviewee narratives that show the ways in which interior design relates to sexual identity, I move to look at my interview with Dwayne. He recalled two objects that might declare the home as LGBTQ occupied: "Magazines or photographs of their partners", he observes, "are all pretty 'normal' " (interview 27 July 2011). Gay electrician Randy also notes it is not uncommon to see literature, be it magazines or books "lying about ([including] *QX* magazine or *Boyz*)" (interview 9 June 2011). A participant snapshot from Kylie and Kiera illustrates the type of magazine domestic tradespeople could find in some homes (Figure 5.2).



Figure 5.2 – A photograph showing Kylie and Kiera's Diva magazines, located next to their sofa.

For Marshal, a divide exists between younger and older generations of LGBTQ Londoners with respect to LGBTQ press magazines in the home:

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A copy of *Gay Times* or *Attitude* ([can be found in the homes of] older ones); the younger ones would probably have *Boyz* or *QX* hanging around. The older ones tend to have them hidden away; the younger ones have them out on the shelves (interview 28 July 2011).

While Marshal suggests a generational divide exists, in the homes I visited such a split was not so straight forward. I found gay press periodicals in older households as well as younger households; equally there were homes from both age categories that did not have any magazines at all on display. This is one of many examples where it is clear that generalisations are risky and difficult.

A quote from Carl captures the way pictures and artwork can identify one's home: "Pictures is the big one... generally its pictures which show them [*sic*] and a partner or a gay... art work" (interview 30 July 2011). Carl was not the only tradesperson to mention pictures with partners being a key identifier of sexual identity. Julie and Carina note: "A lot of the homes we go into will have family pictures of their same-sex partner or their children that they have together; it's a really good talking point around that". Even though most items are packed up by the time Sean is hired to move LGBTQ Londoners, he noted seeing larger objects like "pictures of Marilyn Monroe or Madonna, things like that; two guys kissing" (interview 26 July 2011). Sean's quote touches on those objects that are stereotypically tied to queer identity *i.e.* Marilyn Monroe and Madonna – among a handful of other famous women in show business – have been, for some gay men, idols for their embodiment of the diva persona and strong independent nature (Halperin's 2012 study on gay culture touches on these). Nude cleaner Tommy also remarked along similar lines: "generally pictures speak to a client's sexuality, as well as other artwork". Sharing his experience of the home he just cleaned prior to our interview, Tommy recalls:

The guy today, you could pretty much tell. If you walked into his house you would have thought he's either a teenage girl – in a cliché kind of way, because there's lots of male torsos [*sic*], a Glee poster, which is quite gay – or a young gay guy. It's mainly the artwork I would say. Black and white photographs of guys with their clothes off (interview 27 July 2011).

The issue of visibility in LGBTQ homes is, as I have argued in previous chapters, not always as straight forward as finding readily identifiable material objects. Yet almost all domestic tradespeople interviewed looked to more obvious ways LGBTQ identity plays out at home; only one tradesperson raised a subtle example. Dwayne explains: "yesterday I went to see two gentlemen in their late 50s and it [(their sexuality)] wasn't even mentioned... this is their master bedroom and

that was clearly understood: they sleep here together” (interview 27 July 2011). The way I worded the questions that elicited the majority of the discussions on objects in the home admittedly asked participants to list identifiable gay objects rather than less visible ones or objects that might not be identifiable to a stranger. Thus it is possible that I encouraged interviewees to overlook other items that may have been important to one’s sexual identity. However, the fact remains that the majority of ways sexuality plays out at home, in the eyes of LGBTQ tradespeople, was actually through explicit sexualised objects.

Despite the few aforementioned examples, the representation of LGBTQ homes in London this trade network offers is one based largely on the foregrounding of sexual desire. Marshal is one interviewee that saw erotic artwork in a home he has worked in: “for some bizarre reason”, he comments, “sometimes there’s a big decorated dildo in the living room! ... You can often see pornography in the toilet and calendars in the kitchen (from the England rugby team)” (interview 28 July 2011). Remembering back to chapter four, I also found similar objects in a few older participants’ homes – but by no means was this standard. Julie and Carina also recall seeing erotic art: “The gay guy that I used to work for had a big David statue; lots of paintings of cocks all over the place; lots of nude males all over the place” (interview 11 August 2011). Randy also commented that he often saw erotic artwork in the homes he works in: “A gay person might find the male bum beautiful so there would be a picture on the wall” (interview 9 June 2011).

Other domestic trade interviewees noted seeing adult videos in the homes they visited. Brenda observed that “porn collections are a dead giveaway!” (interview 15 August 2011). Jackson recalled seeing similar sexual objects; at one client’s home he was confronted with sexualised identity on more than one occasion: “he used to leave out some really interesting things. He had no problems leaving out used condoms *etc.*; his life was very much an open book.” Faced with uncomfortable objects Jackson recalled visiting the client who “always had wild nights before” he would come to clean:

He left sex toys in the lounge, and I had to go up to him and say “I’m not picking that up”. And he just laughed and said “oh, don’t worry about it, I didn’t expect you to”. It didn’t actual faze me. There was no embarrassment – I just thought I’m not picking that up!

He felt his unaffected approach was one of the reasons gay clients employed him: with a gay cleaner, Jackson notes, “if you happen to leave a porn DVD out it’s fine,

if you happen to have had a heavy night no one is going to judge you...” (interview 16 June 2011).

Domestic tradespeople can come in contact with very intimate objects, for instance Marshall remembers some of his regular clients:

I worked for a female dominatrix for a year. We fell out because she replaced me with a sissy (someone that cleans for pleasure and takes abuse and does it for free). I was so reliant on her every week, cleaning her dungeon and classroom that she had downstairs. We were fairly close and sometimes the clients were downstairs and I'd be upstairs or *vice versa*. I took it really to heart when she replaced me by a sissy. I also used to know a lot of escorts so I'd clean up after they had a big party. So quite often I'd get a phone call at 3:00am on a Sunday morning and go to Soho or Covent Garden... Tidying up they would just leave 60/70 quid on the table. What looked like a huge mess took just a few hours to clean up (interview 28 July 2011).

In chapter one I also noted how Cory has painted wardrobes and had to get quite personal with certain objects that relate to sexual identity, specifically S/M identity (interview 27 July 2011). Unlike Cory, my own research did not bring me in contact with these intimate spaces, and indeed any one of the homes that I visited could have had any possibility of sexualised objects hidden away in wardrobes.

It is safe to assume is that Cory remains in business because, like Jackson, he is unfazed by what he finds in the homes he works in. Gay electrician Randy also believes the non-judgmental approach to the display of sexual objects is one of the reasons non-heterosexual Londoners employ domestic tradespeople. Randy draws a distinction between the sexualised objects on display in the gay homes he works in and those hidden away in straight households he visits:

Gay people aren't shy and they wouldn't put that stuff away... [There may be] a fishbowl of condoms on the bedside table... I know if I'm in a straight home because sexuality is hidden, put away into the cupboard (with the exception of the tittie calendar in the kitchen of the home belonging to two straight lads). There are no signs of any sexual life at all in most straight homes. I'm sure if I looked under the mattress or in the top drawer I'd find something, but last night's dildo is hidden away before I get there. I think straight people think it's distasteful, whereas gay people aren't about to hide anything, we like to shock.

Randy's quote is the first one in this chapter so far to draw comparisons between straight homes and gay homes – something that I was not able to investigate first hand in this research project, in that it would have made a much larger scope.

Asking participants to draw from experiences working with heterogeneous sexualities proved particularly useful to bring the conversation away from sexualised objects; although looking to these excerpts highlights other stereotypical and

generalised representations of home they begin to illuminate that other aspects of subjectivity are at work in the homes domestic tradespeople visit. I begin first by looking to Marshal, who was confident there are clear distinctions. Marshal used the adjective ‘fussy’ to describe the style of homes belonging to gay men: “I find a lot of gay homes tend to be very fussy on style;... you open the doors and there’s loads of cutlery and towels that all match. And working for women you don’t even see that fussiness.” As a result of this attribute, Marshal feels that “it’s tough cleaning for a gay individual because they’ll want specific things” done in a certain way, which can be difficult (interview 28 July 2011). Mover Sean felt one of the main differences has to do with the quantity of possessions: “I would say someone who is gay might have a lot more stuff than someone who is straight: more clothes, more pictures, more ornaments, things like that”. Given Sean is being paid to take packed items out of the house and load them into his van, he does not always get a chance to notice interior design; however, he asserts: “you see other stuff putting it on the van [and] you think “that wouldn’t be at everyone’s house”, like pictures... nice things, nice ornaments; you wouldn’t see those in a straight guy’s house” (interview 26 July 2011). Although nude cleaner Tommy works exclusively in the homes of gay and bisexual men, he offered a similar view: “They generally have fairly good taste in furnishings... it’s quite tidy with good taste”. In other words, “there’s decor that I can tell is gay just because it’s particular, like if it’s really stylish: an eye for detail; I can just tell”. Talking more about the homes he visits Tommy notes, “[the] homes are pretty immaculate... they generally have fairly good taste in furnishings” (interview 27 July 2011). And Randy also commented that there are clear distinctions:

I can always tell as soon as I go in if it’s a straight home or a gay home. The stereotypes are true: the straight boy home has stacks of CDs on the floor and clothes around; the gay home has style. The straight female home has matching fabrics and themed rooms: this is the pastel room; this is the dark brown room (interview 9 June 2011).

It is clear that these views fit with media representations of gay homes based on stereotypes of style and flare; it is even possible that LGBTQ tradespeople might agree with a gay domestic aesthetic put forward in chapter two – at least in terms of furnishings and decorating, although perhaps not so much in terms of the architecture itself. Yet I argue it is important to understand the specificity of the homes tradespeople visit – not dissimilar to the gay domestic aesthetic, these homes need to be qualified by the intersections of wealth, class and desire for ‘showmanship’. After suggesting there are “definitely” differences, Randy acknowledged that it comes

down to the demographics of the clients that can afford to hire an electrician. Randy notes that along with middle-class gay men the other main group that employ him is,

Actually mainly single, widowed, divorced women, or women that run the house while the husband is off in the city. It tends to be middle-upper class women from Primrose Hill and other affluent areas because those are the people that can afford to modify their home.

Randy offers a unique suggestion explaining why a straight woman might want to patronise a gay electrician:

They tend to hire a gay electrician because of the stereotypes that work in my favour: they think (and it's true) that I'll come in and clean up after myself; I'll take my shoes off before I stand on the furniture; I'll put extra care into my work; I'll be tidy; and I won't hit on them (interview 9 June 2011).

Marshall also made a similar comment: "I've had an occasional straight woman wanting a gay man to clean for them because they feel they can trust them [*sic*]" (interview 28 July 2011). Randy was one of the few interviewees who noted his time is divided almost equally in both straight and gay homes, thus he is appropriately suited to comment on the similarities and differences between the two. He continues:

These women and gay males tend to have a higher disposable income and they have a desire to care for their home. A straight man living alone would just run an extension cord across the floor rather than hire an electrician to put in a socket. And he would also buy a cheap shade from IKEA rather than have a new light fixture installed. Gay men are also less willing to risk getting electrocuted and tend not to do it themselves (interview 9 June 2011).

Randy's quotes hint at larger factors beyond sexuality that play into the visibility of identity at home: specifically wealth, class and background; all factors that need to be contextualised and are often overlooked in representations of LGBTQ domesticity.

Brenda observes that the style of the homes she visits has more to do with whether there are kids or not. Not only do children necessitate practical design, like the avoidance of breakable items at low height, but they also are an additional expense. Brenda suggest that some of the LGBTQ homes she visits might be different, but "if they do not have kids they can be a bit more expensive with what they spend their money on... but that would be the same for straight people who don't have kids" (interview 15 August 2011). The homes many LGBTQ tradespeople visit are exclusive: in many instances they are owned by singles or couples without children who have the money, desire and time to hire domestic tradespeople.

Similarly, Julie and Carina feel that the homes they visit, those belonging to middle-upper class Londoners that can also afford to hire a carpenter, do not have children living in them, and as a result of this, there is a difference. Starting off her quote, though, Julie was confident that there are discernible traits – namely better taste – in the LGBTQ homes she visits, but after thinking through this she begins to acknowledge the specificity and the fact that other factors are at work beyond sexuality:

Yeah, I do actually [think there is a difference]. I think gay people do ordinarily have better taste, or that I appreciate their taste more: less clutter, more minimalist [design]. Maybe it's the class as well. Most people that I work for do have a disposable income, so they keep up to date, they get rid of stuff, they renew and replace. Most people I work for don't have kids.

Carina agrees with her partner and speaks more to the other factors Julie hints at:

Yeah that's already a lifestyle choice that we can relate to because we don't have children so we spend our time and money decorating our house as opposed to raising children... so I do think there is a difference actually (interview 11 August 2011).

Jackson also suggests that the difference in interior design of the queer homes he worked in was determined by similar lifestyle choices. He explains:

Yes absolutely [there is a difference]. The gay homes were quite minimal compared to the family homes which were full of clutter... Whereas with the gay men I worked for, their home was their showcases; there were lovely pieces of art, lovely furnishings. Because both of those homes... were quite minimalist, if something wasn't clean you saw the dirt (interview 16 June 2011).

Thus Jackson suggests that the gay clients he worked for were more interested in making their home a “minimalist” “showcase” compared to the “family homes” of heterosexuals. Jackson's remark recall a contentious argument made by Downs (whose problematic text I touched on in chapter two), specifically that gay men make their homes showpieces because of internalised shame resulting from growing up gay in a straight man's world (Downs 2006). Although there are differences in style between the specific homes these interviewees draw on, it is important to contextualise such differing factors like class, wealth socio-economic background, lifestyle choices and the inclusion of children: it is not possible to draw clear generalisations based on sexuality whether about experiences of dealing with shame or in the homes we live in. Regarding wealth, specifically, Cory observed that “Normally if someone can afford to pay someone to decorate, they're in a slightly higher income bracket otherwise they would do it themselves, or not bother” (interview 27 July 2011). And Carl commented that his clients are mainly “middle

income... generally professional people” (interview 30 July 2011). Again, it is difficult to draw similarities and differences when such vast lifestyle factors exist. One final quote from Jackson hints that even the geography of the home is an important factor:

I would say the gay clients I had had more urban and contemporary homes as opposed to the [heterosexual] famil[ies] that had very suburban homes (interview 16 June 2011).

Contradicting the views of tradespeople above that suggest there *are* differences between the visibility within straight and gay homes, Cory offers a poignant quote that supports my argument. Cory suggests even within the similar class homes that he visits it is impossible to generalise:

You would think [there is a difference]... Some places I go to are beautiful, very stylish, but some of them are absolutely minging [*sic*]. And I’m shocked that gay men have such terrible taste. But no, I think they’re as good or as bad as anyone else. I’ve been to some pretty nice straight houses and some pretty minging houses [*sic*]. So it’s very mixed (27 July 2011).

Sean also feels that “there is nothing really typical” to a gay home:

Going into someone’s house who is gay or lesbian, I don’t find their flat is that different to a [straight] guy or a [straight] woman. I moved a couple guys last week from east London to Hampstead and there was nothing different about moving a straight guy.

Finally, Dwayne, who has been working in the business for almost four decades, notes the uniqueness that used to define gay homes is no longer prevalent; thus it is impossible to discern:

The gay community [was] known for its ability to be innovative... [It was] always searching for the newest, the latest”. [However,] I think that is changing with all the makeover programmes, magazines and the information that is available on television. I think we’re all educated about what would look nice, or what possibilities are out there. I don’t think that’s the case anymore; I think there’s a blurring on that issue (interview 27 July 2011).

Thus, reading interior design through the lens of sexual identity is no longer possible for this interviewee: home makeover shows are “blurring” the differences (interview 27 July 2011).

The interview transcripts with LGBTQ domestic tradespeople have been valuable in numerous ways. On the one hand, the narratives were largely unsurprising: they presented a relatively homogeneous view into exclusive domestic spaces. Spaces that belong to out LGBTQ Londoners who first, have a desire to visibly display their minority identity in the homemaking process, which frequently relate to sexual desire; second, wish to foreground sexuality in the process of hiring a

tradesperson; third, have the capital (wealth, class, and time) to renovate the proprietary home; and, fourth, do not seem to have children (although admittedly this conclusion is tenuous). Even within these ten interviews it is difficult to draw generalisations in the domestic spaces they visit, though. Not only does this reinforce the need for a mixed-methods approach and a degree of criticality when looking to transcripts from tradespeople, but it also shows that stereotypes need to be interrogated on all fronts. This section in particular has argued that it is important to contextualise other factors beyond sexuality that play a role in the politics of visibility in the queer home. Thus representations of sexual minority homes presented on TV, discussed in architectural history and that can be found in newsprint sources, such as projects like Boom (discussed in chapter two) need to be contextualised in terms of their specificity.

Beyond showing the instability of stereotypes, the interviews with LGBTQ tradespeople that this chapter has drawn from have been valuable for supporting the larger argument of the thesis. The seemingly homogeneous view these interviewees provide, queer heteronormative understandings of home through obvious and unsurprising ways. In most cases, interviewees suggest, this is done through the display of material culture of the community or through the display of objects relating to sexual desire. Recalling earlier chapters, my own findings stand in contrast to what LGBTQ tradespeople found. None of the homes I visited included objects relating to explicit same-sex sexual interaction (although in a small minority of homes I found pornographic artwork). Thus rather than offer a more complete view, the interviews conducted with the gay plumber trade network offers a complementary look at these spaces – a view into a specific and exclusive minority of LGBTQ Londoners' homes.

Conclusion

This chapter began by contextualising the 'gay plumber' phenomenon in order to show the ways in which these people and the people who employ them are queering heteronormativity at home. These narratives offer a seemingly homogenous view into exclusive spaces where stereotypes abound. But equally looking at the specificity of these spaces showed on the one hand that the queer home cannot be generalised, but, on the other, that there are even contradictions within the ten interviewees that this chapter draws from.

In the empirical research my hope was that through interviewing eleven tradespeople (in ten interviews) along with 48 home owners and renters I would be able to grasp a complete and clear picture of the ways in which Londoners are queering heteronormativity at home in London. But, as this chapter has shown, such a task is impossible to do. The experience of interviewing these tradespeople has necessitated a certain degree of embodied reflexivity put forward in existing critical approaches by feminist and queer theorist (discussed in chapter two alongside the praxis of writing autobiographically). Thinking through my experience and in analysing the transcripts it became clear that it is not a productive exercise to pinpoint, that is, to narrow down a comprehensive viewpoint – how one could queer heteronormativity. Rather I argue the queering of heteronormativity is done in an endless multiplicity of ways. In other words sexuality is not always as clearly defined in the homemaking process as the few examples in architectural history or media representations would suggest. In the next and final chapter I continue more explicitly the theme of reflexivity by wrapping up the thesis and looking to my experience researching queer domesticity.

Conclusion

This thesis has investigated the multiple ways in which sexuality plays out in domestic spaces belonging to non-famous LGBTQ Londoners. Drawing from interviews with 58 people in total, home occupiers as well as domestic tradespeople, I have attempted to give visibility to the act of homemaking. Focusing on this process has allowed me to argue that research participants are queering heteronormativity at home and therefore contributing to a queer politic. Taking a domestic approach to queer theory might be risky in the eyes of some, but it is one that I feel is timely. Such an approach comes not only after a long transition in the way minority subjectivity is experienced, but which also results from the work of feminists and queer theorists who have paved a path allowing a project like this one to exist in the first place – by destabilising epistemology including the methods used to produce knowledge. In making an argument that sees queer in part become less peripheral, I have attempted to tread lightly. It has been my goal to build on existing approaches, to acknowledge their contribution and limitations without rejecting them; the thesis aims to open up queer politics to a wider demographic. Importantly I have not meant to suggest one must choose to assimilate or separate, to embrace public sexual shame or normalise and domesticate. Rather, my point is that these are no longer relevant or helpful binaries. There needs to be a way for multiple approaches to work together and to show that identity is not a static thing, that one may travel back and forth at various points in the day, year or lifespan across any space or political agenda. Allowing diverse non-heterosexual identities to operate in parallel through multiple approaches can challenge heteronormativity in the most powerful way.

Focusing on the small-scale and mundane ways that LGBTQ people make a home begins to work towards opening up queer theory and politics. But it has been a multi-layered argument where the narratives have shown that Londoners queer home in visible and obvious ways relating to the display of queer cultural artefacts, and where others reject the notion that there are links between sexuality and homemaking – both approaches and those that do not easily fit within this admittedly simple binary are political acts, as pointed out in the introduction. The research has shown the varied and contradictory nature of minority identity at home. I agree with Cook when he remarks, “queer identities and identifications are neither unitary nor exclusive...” (Cook 2012: 176). Rather queer identity, like heterosexual identity, is shaped by a multiplicity of subject positions including race, class, wealth, desire, sex *etc.* “For this reason”, Cook claims, and I would concur, “I haven’t been able to

locate a binding and singular experience or model of queer domesticity” (Cook forthcoming: c. 4). Rather than focus on a singular representation of queer space, or LGBTQ domestic architecture, which can be troublesome, as discussed in chapter two, the previous chapters attempted to embrace the complicatedness of minority subjectivity.

The thesis was organised into three front-end chapters and three empirical chapters. The opening chapter was structured around the key concepts of the argument: heteronormativity and queering. Both were used as a way to introduce the project and the goal of contributing to a shift in queer theory. In addition, the chapter began to situate the argument and its political remit in the contemporary moment and existing literature. In chapter one I offered an overview of the methodological implications of the project. Although the shortest, it was necessary to frame the approaches taken in the empirical research. Introducing the research methods in the first chapter, which consisted of an analysis of the primary and secondary approaches, set up the project as a whole. The main focus of the second chapter was to situate the research project in, and show how it develops out of, the recent literature in architectural studies, geographies of sexualities, feminist and queer theory – work that also contributes to challenging hegemonic ideology but some of which has worked to normalise a certain type of queer identity and space. To contextualise the argument I looked to texts but also to relevant architectural projects that foreground minority sexuality. In the final part I acknowledged the limitations of an existing gay domestic aesthetic which then allowed me to go on to show in the subsequent chapters that LGBTQ homemaking, at least the homes in this research project, unfolds in contrasting ways, presenting an alternative representation of domestic aesthetics.

The empirical body began with chapter three, which focused on the generational issues affecting younger participants’ experiences of home, mainly through the themes of migration, coming out, and homemaking in both the present and future. These revealed the perhaps unexpected fact that many of the interviewees – although not all – considered their home or future home to be similar to and not far off from the heteronormative home. Thus contrary to a gay domestic aesthetic, the queer home for some is much like heteronormative domesticity in style, ideology and aspirations. I suggested that to support heteronormative ideologies through the embodiment of a LGBTQ subjectivity is a subversive political and destabilising act. Chapter four, which focused on older Londoners, first contextualised the socio-

political history that has shaped these participants' earlier lives both at home and more generally. The chapter then looked in depth at materiality to show the heterogeneous ways sexuality plays out at home for this group. The chapter as a whole complements the earlier pieces by challenging commonly-held representations and stereotypes of sexual minority domesticity; it not only showed that generalisations are difficult, but also it celebrated the nuanced – as well as more obvious – ways that heteronormativity is being queered at home by this age cohort. And finally, chapter five looked to the urban trade phenomenon of the gay plumber (and other LGBTQ domestic tradespeople) whose narratives tended to dwell on the more obvious ways heteronormativity is being queered. Although I had hoped these interview transcripts would illuminate a wider representation of the spatiality of sexuality and home, they offered a largely homogeneous view of a specific niche of the community. Keeping this specificity in mind, though, they equally showed the difficulty in generalising the queer home.

The autobiographical and reflexive voice has been a thread throughout the introduction and subsequent five chapters. Feminist and queer theorists in particular, it was shown in chapter two, have found the autobiographical voice conducive to acknowledging the specificity and situated-ness of research which seeks to destabilise oppressive hierarchies. Following this tradition of recognising one's embodied subjectivity in research, I pointed out that this domestic thesis is an intensely personal project. And carrying the autobiographical theme forward through the remainder of this conclusion, I reflect back on three experiences that took place during the final year of the project which allowed me to present the research to diverse audiences. First, however, I want to explain why a domestic thesis in particular might benefit from dissemination.

With so much research on sexual minorities that aims to contribute to debates about equality, the question of practical dissemination is certainly an important one. As previously noted, the trend in geographies of sexualities has been to focus on visible and peripheral zones of sexual identity such as gay villages or spaces where cruising takes place. One of the reasons academics have focused on these sites is that their lesson for activism was unmistakable: sexual minorities could assert their identity and stake claim to zones in the city through queer actions, thereby contributing in a undeniable way to overturning heteronormativity. But, as noted previously, looking at domestic space necessarily raises a challenge in terms of activism. In the *Queers in Space* anthology (Ingram *et al.* 1997), many of the essays

explore the ways in which queer activism can interrogate public space, and in his chapter offering an archaeology of public sex Bell asserts that the suburban family home is virtually impenetrable. As Dines paraphrases, “not even a crowd of joyriding ambisexual youths fucking loudly in a suburban semi can tear down the walls” (Dines 2010: 178; paraphrasing Bell 1997: 84). In a separate paper Bell *et al.* (1994) began to discuss some issues that arise from less evident forms of activism. In the widely-cited paper on ‘gay skinheads’ and ‘lipstick lesbians’ the authors faced a dilemma relating to the fact that these subjectivities visibly fit in with larger ideas of masculinity and femininity linked to heterosexuality: in other words the challenge offered to heteronormative identities is limited to the minority that is in on the secret. In a similar way as researching invisible forms of LGBTQ identities that inhabit space outside of the home, one of the challenges of focusing on interior and private space has to do with finding a way to instigate larger ideological change. There is the potential that representations of LGBTQ domesticity might not subvert heteronormativity, but I am optimistic and hopeful. As noted earlier, feminist theory has shown that “the personal *is* political”; despite the physical boundary of the front door existing between inside and outside, as social beings we take our politics with us as we move back and forth between both domains. In other words, there is a fluid dialogue between all types of domesticity; ideals of queer and heterosexual domesticities, and the people who inhabit them, can permeate each other – this can happen at home but also in any space of interaction. Moreover, perhaps more so than work on public sites of visible LGBTQ identity where research has been happening for almost three decades, a relatively new domestic approach to queer politics will benefit from research dissemination which is a key step in giving agency and visibility to the ways in which ordinary Londoners are queering heteronormativity at home.

I took part in three events during the final year of the project that offered the chance to showcase the research to diverse audiences.³⁶ The first event I want to discuss was sponsored by University College London’s Urban Laboratory and took place from 4–7 July 2012. *Cities Methodologies* was a large exhibition which gave researchers from the humanities and social sciences a small space to present their current work. With social anthropologist Rachel Scicluna, whose research focuses on the experiences of older lesbians and their kitchens (Scicluna forthcoming), together

³⁶ I overlook my experience of presenting the research at academic conferences, which tends to be a more common dissemination approach scholars take (in the acknowledgments I mention some of the conferences I delivered papers at).

we inhabited a small corner of one of the exhibition rooms. The below image shows how we domesticated a corner of the gallery by hanging wallpaper and with other common furnishings and objects found in the home, including a covered table, flowers, and a lamp (Figure I).



Figure I – Our domesticated corner of Cities Methodologies, an event that allowed for the dissemination of the research to many in the wider university community and beyond.

Typed text mounted on the wall above the lamp urged the viewer to think of this as a queer home and explained the concept of heteronormativity – and in light of the fact that the exhibition was opened to scholars from other disciplines and to non-academics, we were able to introduce to many people the normalisation of heterosexuality. We hoped that the project would encourage visitors to think about the ways in which the home is one of many sites where heteronormative regimes are enforced, from family portraits on the wall, to children’s toys. We used two view-masters (seen resting on top of the table) to convey the tunnel vision of heteronormativity. Further, we hoped they would urge the viewer to think about the concept in at least two ways: first, the images we had printed onto the slide reels were everyday domestic scenes submitted to us from our respective research participants; second, we hoped the toys would showcase that the normalisation of heterosexuality begins at childhood and continues right through adulthood – thus

underscoring that the concept is deeply ingrained in our society (see also Pilkey and Scicluna 2012b). Visitors enjoyed playing with the toys, with many remarking that they had not used them since their own childhood.

Looking back on what was a unique experience to present the research at a university exhibition, I hope that over the four days at least one visitor brought their child who might have asked the question: “why are these boring pictures featured on the slides?” I acknowledge that our mini-exhibition showcased a rather mundane representation of queer identity playing out at home. But this was deliberate. Without disregarding those participants in the previous chapters who identify with visibly queer objects in the homemaking process, we were interested in presenting the subtle ways that minority identity relates to home. This, I hope, urged the viewer to imagine heteronormativity as a powerful discourse which can be queered in any number of ways. Further, the unexciting wallpaper we put up, among other furnishings, reinforces the notion that the domestic can be challenged by queer occupants in very discrete ways which look like any other home – indeed you would need to understand a subjective narrative behind the scene to understand why it is queer. This stands in contrast not only to a gay domestic aesthetic as currently presented in architectural studies and in wider society, but also to a similar art project from 2008, which I was introduced to when disseminating the research at a later event in 2012. In *There’s No Place Like Homo* (Figure II) Brooklyn-based artist Buzz Slutzky presents a domestic gallery scene which uses wallpaper to “institutionalize... queer cultural symbols and celebrity-icons into an aesthetic of home design that is associated with postwar heterosexual Americana” (Slutzky, no date).



Figure II – There’s No Place Like Homo offers a similar scene to our Cities Methodologies exhibition but uses wallpaper to present a contrasting queer agenda.

The wallpaper design, which links to notions of camp gay culture (see Halperin 2012), recycles well-known gay icons in an effort to queer home, and in so doing *There’s No Place Like Homo* reproduces an ideal of queer domesticity likely removed from the experiences and aesthetic tastes of the vast majority of society, both straight and LGBTQ – thus the artist presents a different queer agenda. While the *Cities Methodologies* scene we created allowed the subtleties of my argument to be disseminated to, for the most part, academics, another event I took part in presented the research to a much wider audience.

In the spring of 2012 I was asked by American artist and architect Fritz Haeg – whose design for the Bernardi residence I introduced in the final section of chapter two – to co-facilitate a project that he was organising. *The Sundown Schoolhouse of Queer Home Economics* was a “rogue school within a school” response – inspired by the Victorian home economics manuals to teach young women domestic skills (Haeg, *Schoolhouse Projects: Sundown Schoolhouse of Queer Home Economics*) –

to the programme of events that were taking place at London's Hayward Gallery from 11 June to 11 July 2012 (Jones and Calvi 2012). Unlike the other events that were more conventionally school-like in nature, including art classes, lectures and body painting courses, the schoolhouse was a learn-by-doing environment that was literally separate to the others – the dome in which all domestic events took place was located on the terrace of the gallery (Figure III).



Figure III – The Sundown Schoolhouse of Queer Home Economics was another way this research has been disseminated to wider audiences.

There were many events held in the dome, including, among others, crocheting the communal rug out of old clothes, knitting groups, talks – Cook introduced his forthcoming book on queering domesticity – performances and even a monthly meeting of the London Faeries. During the first week Haeg inhabited the dome from morning to night, and I helped out and took part in the busy schedule of events. From the second week until the end of the project there were only occasional activities scheduled, generally on a Saturday or Sunday, and I acted as a scholar in residence revising the introduction to this dissertation. Figure IV shows the writing space I set up for myself, which faced the dome's entrance so that I could speak with the occasional visitor that happened to wander in.



Figure IV – My writing space at The Sundown Schoolhouse of Queer Home Economics.

The above illustrations show how I pegged up images from my research on string around the upper part of the dome which prompted visitors to ask questions about my project; I also explained how it fit within Haeg's project.

The period of residence I held at the Hayward Gallery, allowed me to write an important part of the dissertation literally surrounded by artefacts of queer domesticity while disseminating my research to visitors who occasionally stopped in. Writing in this productive space, my own subject position was foregrounded every moment – any guest or staff member who came into the tent and saw me working or spoke to me about the schoolhouse project or my thesis immediately read my body as *queer* and *political*. Recalling Rendell's (2005) argument about architecture-writing as a reflexive prompt to the critic drawn from multiple disciplines, introduced in chapter two, I follow her line of thinking but take it out of the original context with which she meant it (a criticism that relates site-specific artwork to place) and apply it in a queer context. I suggest at the schoolhouse I was taking part in the embodiment of 'architecture-queer-writing'. In other words, this tripartite collection of words brings to the fore the "position of the author, not only in relation to theoretical ideas... and architectural spaces but also to the site of writing itself", and, I would add, this has the result of foregrounding aspects of queer identity from both guests

and author (Rendell 2005: 256). Sandwiching an aspect of identity between Rendell's compound term is deliberate. 'Architecture-queer-writing' captures the experience of bringing out one aspect of identity, more so than others, in three figural spaces: the thought process of the writer (or critic); the writing of the architecture I analyse in my research; and in the space of reception. On the latter-most point I presented parts of my writing to visitors, at an hour-long talk during the first week, but also one person in particular who regularly visited the dome was eager to read parts of the introduction I was working on.

While it was a unique space to work in for just over three weeks, the conversations I had with guests were an unexpected valuable component of the residency. Along with the man who read some parts of my writing, another visitor shared her experience of Haeg's Bernardi house which I drew from earlier (Bardell 2012), and finally a third visitor shared her narrative of queer domesticity. On one particularly quiet afternoon a woman, whose name or details I never obtained, was visiting the Hayward Gallery and stopped in to the dome. Over a cup of tea she shared her personal experience working as a developmental aid worker, splitting her home life between London and a small village in Uganda. What was remarkable is that this woman set up a home with her same-sex partner, in a place where homosexuality is vehemently opposed – the Anti Homosexuality Bill (Anon. 2009), also known as "Kill the Gays Bill", has put Uganda in the international press for over three years about this controversial amendment to their legal system.³⁷ Our conversation quickly turned to the differences setting up and negotiating home in two contrasting geographies. Speaking specifically about her kitchen, an important space wherein she and her partner spend much of their time, the guest noted that in her Ugandan home they are forced to create an incredibly dull and boring space, one without any traces of lesbian identity. For obvious reasons that they could not risk exposure; personal mementos which displayed their relationship had to be avoided. Interestingly, when asked how that compares with her London kitchen, she commented that the difference is negligible. While people in London can be as creative and out with their homemaking as they like, she did not feel the need (although presumably other items such as photographs might be on display). Simply put, in London, like the experience of participant Jerry outlined in chapter five, this person did not *need* to visibly display her identity. Thus there is somewhat of a

³⁷ At the time of writing a related independent documentary is playing at select cinemas. *Call me Kuchu* (Wright 2012) tells the true story of David Kato (1964–2011) who was an openly gay man murdered trying to fight this law.

paradox in some queer domesticities: once LGBTQ identity begins to become accepted into society some people, as my research shows, and this woman's narrative points out, no longer need to visibly relate to this aspect of self in the homemaking process. However, in Uganda, draconian stigma around homosexuality most likely means the inverse is true: one can assume oppressed people could benefit from manifesting their identity in the home space through queer cultural objects or other items relating to sexual identity. My guest on that day summed it up like this: she observed that she longed for the day when homosexuality is 'normal' and people in Uganda and the world over can experience the joy of living a boring life (informal discussion, anonymous 21 June 2012).

Through disseminating my research at *The Sundown Schoolhouse of Queer Home Economics* to a wide audience, the inequality that LGBTQ people experience in developing countries was brought centre-stage. The preceding narrative underscores that although we might have reason to celebrate the winning of some rights and social acceptance for some LGBTQ people in developed nations – although as this thesis shows, heteronormativity retains its grip – the struggle continues in very serious ways for people in Uganda and other developing nations. Those homes which included the discrete ways LGBTQ identity plays out, and the interviews with participants that felt their homemaking does not relate to their minority identity, showcase a new queer project.

Again, I underscore that my own subject position plays into why I want to make this argument. I do not belong to any radical queer political movement and unintentionally I have no affinity with people who do – perhaps some LGBTQ people would chastise me for this, but it is a fact and I am not alone. In reflecting on my experience at the dome, I now realise why I felt discontent at times. It is clear that many people used the space to present more radically political forms of queer domesticity, and indeed it became a primary goal. Perhaps the radical nature of many events at the dome is not surprising given the site specificity outside of a regular domestic environment, in an art gallery, but on its terrace – removed from any experience of domesticity I had had before. While the space was successful in its aims of bringing together London's queer community to learn about domesticity, in "an on-going dialog about making ourselves at home", I had many positive experiences, particularly with the guests that floated in serendipitously, but I never really felt *at home* (Haeg, *Schoolhouse Projects: Sundown Schoolhouse of Queer Home Economics*). It is only now, looking back on the experience as a whole while I

write this seated at my desk purchased from Ikea, located in my ordinary London terraced flat, surrounded by my personal possessions, decorated in a way that has been meaningful to me and my partner, that I can admit this. While the dome proved important for many radical queer domestic activities, my thesis aims to do something different: to demonstrate how heteronormativity and domesticity are shown to be queered in subtle and manifold ways.

A two day conference and film screening, *Sexuality at Home: An Interdisciplinary Research Workshop Exploring the Relationship Between Domesticity and Sexuality*, that I facilitated which took place on 10 and 11 December 2012, is the third and final major point of dissemination for the research. The events showcased creative on-going humanities and social-science based research that investigates, much like this research project, the ways sexual subjectivity relates to and plays out at home (see Pilkey and Scicluna 2012a for a programme and online audio archive). In the conference's introductory welcome talk I highlighted my interest in the field of research and noted that it was my wish to showcase the exciting and novel on-going research currently being undertaken in a variety of disciplines. Organising this event allowed me to invite academics that have shaped this thesis in influential ways, including Bonnevier, Cook, Dines, Gorman-Murray and Betsky (the latter two gave key-note lectures). Given the influential nature of *Queer Space* to architectural studies and to this thesis, I invited Betsky to revisit it on its fifteen year anniversary (Betsky 2012b). Although much of the talk revisited the original material introducing the arguments to the audience, Betsky offered a few key points of contextualisation which helped shape my critique. As discussed at length in chapter two, the book focuses largely on male same-sex desire and has some clear limitations. However, Betsky made an important point of contextualisation at the beginning of his talk when he drew attention to the book's dedication and the moment he was writing in. The book's dedication is vaguely concise. It states, simply: "To Frank Israel...who brought us together" (Betsky 1997: v; ellipsis in original). But in elaborating on this in his talk, Betsky noted that Israel was not only the person who put him in touch with his husband, but was also a very close friend and one of the first he lost to AIDS.³⁸ Thus in his talk it became clear that the book is situated in a political moment where a response to the horror and loss of AIDS needed to be voiced. In my earlier analysis of the book I note the point that *Queer*

³⁸ Israel (1945–1996) was a well-known American architect working in Los Angeles and among the most famous in the discipline to be claimed by the disease (Anderton 1996; GLBTQ: An Encyclopedia of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, & Queer Culture).

Space needs to be understood in the context in which it was written, but hearing Betsky speak at the *Sexuality at Home* conference only reinforced the specificity of his goal, which tried to find a space which some gay men could assert as their own in a heteronormative world.

At a separate and unrelated lecture the following evening, Betsky (2012a) continued what he started in *Queer Space* by making a case for finding a new definition of architecture that works to improve equality for humanity more generally. In his talk, “Architecture in the Floating World”, he argues that in our postmodern lifestyle humans are everywhere and nowhere at the same time; we are floating about, passing through architecture. Architecture needs to respond to this living condition and redefine itself as a process of “filling in the gaps, unbuilding, making, opening up, reusing the leftovers and turning them into a pleasurable building” (Betsky 2012a). This is not only a response to wasteful consumerism in an effort to save the environment, but it will also give agency to the users of everyday space whilst reshaping our minds as to what architecture can be and what is beautiful. In summary, although this talk was not part of Betsky’s revisit to *Queer Space* and took place separate to the *Sexuality at Home* event, there are clear connecting lines between both, specifically through the notion that architecture needs to be a response to the everyday ways that people live their lives – on this point one can also connect back to the literature discussed in the introduction that makes a case for the social production of space. In addition, there are links between Betsky’s theorisation of floating architecture as a process which users enact and the theoretical framework of queering which this thesis relies on: both of us seek to open up architecture by showing the ways in which users inhabit and create space. The *Sexuality at Home* event was perhaps one of the most important events of the Ph.D.: it allowed for not only dissemination of my research in the introduction but it saw personal research agendas come to fruition and the development of a social justice goal initially found in *Queer Space*.

As noted in the introduction to this thesis, queer politics is a shifting field both in society generally and within academia specifically. For instance, the Conservative Party in the UK, the same group of politicians that ushered in the homophobic law Section 28 just over two decades ago under Thatcher, have recently taken the once unfathomable progressive decision to support the right for same-sex couples to marry (although *when* I will be able to legally marry my partner in this country remains uncertain). In academia, too, the past two decades have seen

considerable change. From the research proposal right through to the final editing, I never faced backlash within the university community or outside of it when the research was being disseminated (the fact that University College London and The Bartlett School of Architecture sponsored not only this research project but also The *Sexuality at Home* event offers credence to this point). Likely my subject position as a gay white male researcher plays a role in this, but I think also of importance is the changing nature of queer research in the academy. Early scholars like Binnie – who completed, sixteen years ago in 1997, one of the first doctoral dissertations in the field of geographies of sexualities, also at University College London – reported that a queer thesis must be radical and foreground the “mess and goo” of human sexuality in order to overturn the heteronormative nature of academia (Binnie 1997: 160). I think certainly this need has changed. Like the wider queer community’s diverging political approaches, there is definitely a change in the air which has come about thanks to the efforts of earlier generations. Finding a way to disseminate this research outside of academia, to the people whose viewpoints are most in need of revision, however, is an on-going challenge and one that scholars researching minority sexuality and home will continue to face.

In this thesis I have aimed to build on and complement projects from previous decades that have looked to the more visible ways sexuality plays out in peripheral spaces. At the same time I have tried to do something different by reinvesting academic queer activism with a renewed energy that derives out of, rather than in contrast to, the acceptance that can be found in London and the UK in 2013. But in taking this stance, I have not suggested queer politics can rest on its laurels. A quote from Weeks substantiates my point:

Homosexuality may have come out into the open, it may have made institutionalized heterosexuality porous, but even in the advanced cultures of the West it is still subjected to the minoritizing forces that excluded it in the first place. It remains the Other... (Weeks 2007: 12).

While certain tropes of homosexuality have become accepted, other subjectivities who do not identify in this way remain marginalised and oppressed. This project has focused on home in order to contribute to debates that might improve equality for all sexual minorities. To do this I have shown the ways in which the heteronormative domestic sphere is being queered through homemaking practices in obvious, discrete and even hidden ways. I have celebrated the everyday ways queer identity plays out at home and of particular importance has been the surprisingly discrete ways this is done. Many participants felt their homes are much like any other in London, which

not only echoes the transition in queer politics, but which relatedly shows a new way to bring about change: by echoing heteronormative ideology whilst simultaneously and possibly unintentionally subverting it.

As suggested, it is my hope that in taking a new approach this project extends queer politics into new territory. One body of literature in particular that could benefit from a revised approach is the work on gay shame. In the introduction I contextualised theories of shame in order to be ‘up front’ with potential criticism where some scholars might suggest I am positioning myself in a binary with those that embrace the radicalness of shame. I noted that current approaches to shame tend to work in dichotomous ways where embracing shame implies rejecting pride which relate intimately to other binaries including differentiation/assimilation, then/now, public/private, queer/normal: in a word, theories of shame can imply one must be either radical or domestic. However, in light of the domestic spaces which unfolded over the previous chapters I have made the case for complexity and diversity in the way LGBTQ lives unfold at home and beyond. Therefore approaches to shame could also embrace a model of diversity and nuance. Although I did not ask research participants specific questions about shame, the topic came up in various ways which suggest that shame *matters* at home, and indeed the domestic is a potential space of shame. For instance experiences of shame change across the lifespan: recall that in the past Eric embraced shame when he was younger when the only way he could find a partner was to cruise for sex, but now his home is defined in contrast to shame. Shame can also be engaged with at home in a way that is ironic and funny: looking back to Gerard’s home, his piece of genitalia pottery perhaps plays with shame; relatedly, the narrative he shared of the double-sided art work might relate to shame in ironic ways. Shame can play out at home in ways where only astute visitors would notice: participant Robert noted that small and humorous magnets on the refrigerator might give away his sexuality, but they are kept on the side where few would see. And of course shame can also be found at home in radical ways which came up in many of the interviews with tradespeople, for example gay cleaner Marshall shared the story of cleaning a dominatrix’s sex dungeon located in the basement of her home. Future work might continue this short discussion by revising theories of shame which tend to position against the domestic. I contend that it would be beneficial to continue bringing shame into the domestic sphere which show the complicated ways it plays out at home – in radical ways but also more nuanced ways – which can add to the project of queering heteronormativity.

In drawing this chapter to a close I want to share a view into my own domestic space to show how my homemaking practices, like that of the participants in this research project, work to queer heteronormativity in complex ways. In Figure V one can see similarities with some of the spaces in the empirical research: on the surface there are few signs of visible minority identity and the architecture itself shows no affinity with a gay domestic aesthetic (discussed in chapter two).



Figure V – A view of my own queer domesticity.

However, a personal narrative – which in the research meant drawing from in-depth semi-structured interviews with LGBTQ home owners and renters – can explain moments of queering. In terms of living arrangement – I share the space with my same-sex partner – but also in light of domestic materiality. The white bookcase at centre displays personal objects from both of us. Material possessions of relevance include gay fictional books, photographs of us, a vase of sand art echoing the rainbow flag (perhaps the most widely disseminated gay cultural object), and even a framed picture of graffiti that was displayed at the *Cities Methodologies* exhibit which reads “Fuck Heteronormativity”. These objects are presented with other items that relate to various aspects of our shared interests, including books on travel, cooking and items we have picked up on holiday. Along with academic books on queer theory found in the right-most bookshelf and a camp Union Jack pillow, another important object that works to queer heteronormativity in this photograph is

the artwork above the fireplace. My partner and I found this painting whilst on a walk in west London; it is an important piece of art that speaks to our relationship.

In this photograph our sexuality plays out in quiet ways which contrast stereotypical depictions of gay domesticity. Further, I would go so far as to suggest there is nothing significant about my own London home. Thus my own homespace mimics the argument in this thesis which has aimed to see queer in part become more widely integrated into everyday space. But, at the risk of repetition, I do not suggest that more obvious representations of queer home are less important, as they too are valuable in working towards queering heteronormativity, and indeed formed part of this research. Rather my approach has been one that aspires to see queer opened up to a multiplicity of identities and domestic arrangements, including those that fit with mainstream representation – that is, to see all queer spaces and identities find wider acceptance in queer politics and society more generally.

In this thesis I observe that the ordinariness of queer identity and its manifestation at home is a victory in developed countries in the ‘West’. But as suggested there is still more to do. There is certainly room for future research to carry on the approach of this thesis and to investigate everyday spaces of domesticity, whilst filling in some areas not covered in the preceding chapters. Specifically future research could aim to uncover queer domesticities among British racial and ethnic minorities, transgendered home spaces and homes inhabited by both adults and children. Expanding the approach even wider, additional geographies that could benefit from a future study include other urban locations. In many ways the recruitment methods and findings of this research project are specific to London. For example, I found all participants in businesses, on social media or through word of mouth that are all geographically linked to London, and throughout the interviews issues relating to living in the capital were frequently foregrounded. However, despite the specificity of this London-based study, I argue the methods and findings would be relevant to similar future studies in a selection of other global cities where LGBTQ equality has seen social and legal improvements in recent decades. For instance, one could look to New York City, use similar methods and quite likely uncover comparable findings, yet inevitably distinct case studies. I suggest the fact that one could take a similar approach in other urban areas speaks to the current position of geographies of sexualities and queer politics. I argue geography has, in some ways, become less important as the world continues to see improvements to equality – but this needs clarification. This is not to suggest geography and sexuality

are not intimately linked, as pointed out by my visitor to the Hayward Gallery, and indeed even within London certain localities may reveal challenges for LGBTQ homemakers. However, for a study looking to show the ways certain ordinary home occupiers queer heteronormative ideology, location is not as important as it perhaps once was. Inevitably there would be certain challenges, largely in terms of recruitment, if one was to take the methodological approach of this project and look at non-urban spaces such as suburbia and rural countryside. However, on the one hand, such a project may underscore links between geography and minority sexuality, but on the other it would also add to the diverse ways LGBTQ domesticity unfolds and reveals challenges to heteronormativity. Finally, future research could provide a comparative study drawing from narratives of home belonging to both the sexual majority as well as minority. This approach would show the ways heterogeneous subjectivities relate to experiences of home, and will also uncover, I hypothesise, at least in many homes in London, how this group equally and powerfully challenge ideological understandings of home. Queering heteronormativity at home is an on-going project that an endless possibility of subjectivities can work towards, including both LGBTQ and heterosexual people (Gorman-Murray 2011a and Hubbard 2001 explore how subjectivities within the latter group can be equally subversive).

This thesis, and any future literature that might follow it, celebrates the cross-disciplinary dialogue between feminist and queer theory, geographies of sexualities and architectural history wherein the subtleties of everyday domesticity are highlighted. The activism of the former two disciplines will continue to have an influential effect on the way sexuality is thought to be spatialised in geography and architectural history, specifically by challenging the way domestic space is thought to be used. Following Weeks (2007: X, 2), who suggests “grass-roots agency is central to the direction we are moving in... literally the world we have made together”, I believe the value of this project, and future work that might follow it, which showcases the queering of heteronormativity at home, lies in its recording of everyday transformations of ordinary Londoners’ domestic lives. At the recent academic debate, *Queer Homes, Queer Families: A History and Policy Debate*, Weeks reminded the audience that history is not written by celebrated figures, but by regular people living their daily lives, making a domestic life in the present, by means available to them (Weeks 2012). Finally like the quote by Bachelard that began this thesis in which he acknowledges the beauty that can be found in the

humblest dwelling, I would like to quote architectural historian Robin Evans: “ordinary things”, he observes at the start of his essay “Figures, Doors and Passages”, “contain the deepest mysteries” (Evans 1997 [1978]: 56).

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Formal research interviews with participants

Note 1: Organised by date.

Note 2: Refer to appendix D for a complete breakdown of demographic statistics.

Note 3: All digital recordings are held with author.

Caleb [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 6 January. British Library, London. 1 hour, 12 minutes, 31 seconds.

Derrick [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 6 January. British Library, London. 53 minutes, 23 seconds.

Jason [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 8 January. British Library, London. 2 hours, 21 minutes, 36 seconds.

Devin [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 9 January. Participant's home in east London. 57 minutes, 20 seconds.

Gary and Jack [pseuds.] (2011). Interview with the author on 16 January. Participants' home in south London. 1 hour, 6 minutes, 19 seconds.

Alison [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 20 January. Participant's home in south London. 1 hour, 8 minutes, 3 seconds.

Dale [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 20 January. Wates House, University College London. 46 minutes, 3 seconds.

Rachel [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 24 January. Wates House, University College London. 43 minutes, 2 seconds.

Jerry [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 25 January. Participant's home in south London. 1 hour, 24 minutes, 33 seconds.

Seila [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 27 January. Participant's home in south London. 57 minutes, 46 seconds.

Parker [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 2 February. Wates House, University College London. 1 hour, 20 minutes, 7 seconds.

Eric [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 4 February. Participant's home in south London. 1 hour, 27 minutes, 59 seconds.

Eva [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 7 February. Participant's home in east London. 49 minutes, 19 seconds.

Ritchie [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 7 February. Participant's home in east London. 1 hour, 6 minutes, 6 seconds.

Gerard [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 10 February. Participant's home in south London. 1 hour, 32 minutes, 43 seconds.

- Julio [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 16 February. Wates House, University College London. 1 hour, 8 minutes, 13 seconds.
- Janice and Sarah [pseuds.] (2011). Interview with the author on 17 February. Participants' home in north London. 1 hour, 2 minutes, 18 seconds.
- Dean [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 18 February. Participant's home in north London. 56 minutes, 59 seconds.
- Kylie and Kiera [pseuds.] (2011). Interview with the author on 24 February. Participants' home in south London. 1 hour, 10 minutes, 32 seconds.
- Peter and Pierre [pseuds.] (2011). Interview with the author on 9 March 2011. Participants' home in south London. 47 minutes, 30 seconds.
- Darrell [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 24 March. London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard, London. 59 minutes, 11 seconds.
- Basil and Barclay [pseuds.] (2011). Interview with the author on 30 March. Participants' home in west London. 1 hour, 19 minutes, 42 seconds.
- Scott and Corby [pseuds.] (2011). Interview with the author on 30 March. Participants' home in south London. 1 hour, 29 minutes, 5 seconds.
- Adam [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 31 March. London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard, London. 1 hour, 12 minutes, 10 seconds.
- Maurice [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 1 April. London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard, London. 47 minutes, 13 seconds.
- Sally [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 4 April. Participant's home in north London. 42 minutes, 4 seconds.
- Hugo [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 12 April. Costa Coffee, central London. 57 minutes, 32 seconds.
- James [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 13 April. Participant's home in central London. 55 minutes, 41 seconds.
- Robert [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 15 April. First Out café and bar, central London. 46 minutes, 13 seconds.
- Betty [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 19 April. Pub in west London. 41 minutes, 6 seconds.
- Margaret [real name] (2011). Interview with the author on 20 April. First Out café and bar, central London. 1 hour, 41 minutes, 16 seconds.
- Mario [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 27 April. Participant's home in east London. 40 minutes, 16 seconds.

- Roger [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 27 April. Participant's home in east London. 37 minutes, 41 seconds.
- Kristen [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 28 April. First Out café and bar, central London. 54 minutes, 20 seconds.
- Matt [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 28 April. First Out café and bar, central London. 49 minutes, 17 seconds.
- Edmund [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 3 May. Participant's home in east London. 47 minutes, 9 seconds.
- Sharon [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 10 May. London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard, London. 1 hour, 40 minutes, 40 seconds.
- Karen and Gail [pseuds.] (2011). Interview with the author on 12 May. First Out café and bar, central London. 55 minutes, 18 seconds.
- Janet [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 16 May. First Out café and bar, central London. 58 minutes, 48 seconds.
- Michael and Bradley [pseuds.] (2011). Interview with the author on 11 June. Participants' home in east London. 1 hour, 10 minutes, 25 seconds.

Formal research interviews with domestic tradespeople

Note 1: Organised by date.

Note 2: Refer to appendix F for a complete breakdown of demographic statistics.

Note 3: All digital recordings are held with author.

Randy [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 9 June. Café in central London. Approximately 20 minutes, error recording audio file.

Jackson [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 16 June. First Out café and bar, central London. 29 minutes, 0 seconds.

Sean [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 26 July. Pub in west London. 18 minutes, 6 seconds.

Cory [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 27 July. Café in north London. 16 minutes, 36 seconds.

Dwayne [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 27 July. First Out café and bar, central London. 17 minutes, 59 seconds.

Tommy [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 27 July. First Out café and bar, central London. 32 minutes, 18 seconds.

Marshal [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 28 July. Starbucks, central London. 23 minutes, 13 seconds.

Carl [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 30 July. Café Nero, central London. 20 minutes, 15 seconds.

Julie and Carina [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 11 August. First Out café and bar, central London. 24 minutes, 45 seconds.

Brenda [pseud.] (2011). Interview with the author on 15 August. Online via Skype. 16 minutes, 35 seconds.

Appendices

Appendix A – Ethics Approval Correspondence

Pilkey, Brent

From: Philip Steadman <____>
Sent: December-23-10 11:17 AM
To: Pilkey, Brent, Penner, Barbara
Subject: Fwd: Interviews by PhD student Brent Pilkey

Dear Brent and Barbara,

Brent has no need to go to the College Ethics Committee, as I thought.

Have a very good Christmas,

Phil

Begin forwarded message:

From: Ethics <____>
Date: 23 December 2010 10:35:06 GMT
To: Philip Steadman <____>
Subject: Re: Interviews by PhD student Brent Pilkey

Dear Professor Steadman,

Thank you for your email. I can confirm that this study is covered by exemption (c). It therefore does not need approval by the UCL REC and is within the competence of the Bartlett Ethics Committee.

With best wishes
Angela

On 20/12/2010 16:14, Philip Steadman wrote:
Dear Ethics Committee,

Can I ask your advice as to whether a PhD student in the Bartlett, Brent Pilkey, would need formal ethics approval for some work he is planning? He proposes to interview a number of gay and lesbian subjects about the places where they live. A short description is attached. I have advised Pilkey informally that his work would come under exemption c (as listed on the Ethics website). Pilkey is very well aware of the need to gain full consent, to preserve anonymity in his thesis and any publication, and to destroy any database of names and addresses once the work is complete.

Thank you,

Philip Steadman (Chair of the Bartlett Ethics Committee).

--
Dr Angela Poulter
Administrator of the UCL Research Ethics Committee
Graduate School
UCL
Gower Street
London
WC1E 6BT

Appendix B - Queer Domesticity Interview Questions

Interviewee:

Date:

Location of interview:

Please feel free to pass on any of the questions if you think they are irrelevant or too personal.

Background information:

What city and country were you born in?
What is your current neighbourhood and London Borough of residence? <i>e.g.</i> Clapham, Lambeth
Can you describe your living situation? (Single-occupancy; living with partner; living with flatmates; living with children)
What type of dwelling do you reside in? (Flat in a house; flat in a private block; flat in council block; detached house; terraced house)
What type of tenure do you have? (rent (private); rent (from council); own freehold (land and building); own leasehold (right to live))
What is your age (approximately, if you like)?
What is your occupation?
How would you describe your class background?
What is your ethnicity/ethnic background?
How would you describe your sexual orientation?

Location of home:

Why do you live where you currently do?
How long have you lived here?
Where did you live before?
Are there any overarching factors that determined location? <i>E.g.</i> proximity to parkland, schools, safe area? Transport? Budget?
If there were no obstacles would you relocate? Where would you relocate to?

Interior design and Home maintenance:

Have you done any home renovations? If so, can you tell me what you did, and why you did it? Do you enjoy home renovations?
Where would you get your inspiration from? <i>E.g.</i> a specific TV show?
Are you handy around the house?

If coupled, is one person more handier than the other?
Do you think renting versus owning plays a role in whether you would redecorate?
Would you say that there is a theme or certain style to your home?
Do you have any renovation plans for the future?
If there were no obstacles what would you change about the layout of your home? What would you change about the style or furnishings?
How might the furniture, or the layout, reflect your identity?
Do you think that the furniture or the layout specifically reflects yours sexual identity?

Household objects:

Is your home furnished by you or someone else?
What are you most valued possessions in the home and why?
Do any of these objects reflect your sexual identity?
Does your home have a lot of objects in it? If so, do all of the objects have sentimental value to you?
What object in your home have you had the longest?
What have you brought into your home most recently?
Do you remember any material objects in your family home that formed an important sense of your identity as a child?
Are there objects that you would like to dispose of, but for some reason hold onto?
What are your thoughts on the Rainbow Flag? Would you display it at your home?
Do you own any objects that might be considered 'gay' objects (like the rainbow flag)?

Gardening:

Do you have any house plants?
Are they your responsibility and do you take pride in them?
Do you have a garden/yard?
Do you take an interest in the yard? If coupled, who's responsible for the yard work?
If you enjoy gardening/yard work, what do you like about it?
What do you use your garden/yard for?

Domestic chores (lives as a couple):

Who does the cooking?
Who does the washing up?
Do you consider the arrangement fair?
Is the kitchen considered the domain of one person?
Do you usually cook or order take-away?
Who does the grocery shopping? Where do you tend to shop?
Who does the household chores like dusting, Hoovering, and cleaning the bathroom? Is this one person's responsibility? How often is it done?

Domestic Chores (single):

Do you cook meals regularly at home? Or do you prefer ready-made meals and take-away?
Does one flatmate cook more?
Do you have a cleaning rota? Is it adhered to?
Do you share groceries between your flatmates?

Domestic pleasure:

What do you do to relax in your home?
What rooms do you find most relaxing?
Is there something about the layout of the room, or arrangement or type of furniture that makes that space especially relaxing?
What would you change about that room to make it more relaxing? Any new furniture or gadgets?
Do you have any favourite TV Shows? Do these differ from your partner?
Can you list your most treasured DVDs and books that you currently have displayed in your home?
If coupled, do you each have a 'private space' to go to when you need some alone time?

Entertaining:

How often do you entertain for guests in your home?
What does entertaining typically consist of? Dinner parties? Parties? Who comes over? Are they generally other gay/lesbian people?
If coupled, who tends to prepare the home for entertaining?

Parenting:

Do you have children?
Are you planning to have children? Or any more children?
How old are your children?
If coupled, does one person tend to be more of an authoritative figure?
Do the children have their own spaces in the home?
What do you do in the home to entertain your children?
Is there such a thing as 'family time'?

Pets:

Do you have a pet?
If no, why?
Whose responsibility is it to clean up after the pet?
Is the pet thought of as another member of the family?
Does the pet have its own territory in the home or yard? Where does it sleep?

Neighbourhood:

Is there a sense of community in your neighbourhood?
Do you know any of your neighbours?
Do you know any other gay/lesbian people in the area?
Do you consider the neighbourhood safe?
Do you belong to any neighbourhood organisations?
What would you say is a desirable character about your neighbourhood? What is undesirable?
How are the resources in the area? Nearby to shops? Schools? Libraries?
Do you use any of the nearby public parks?

Transportation:

What TFL Zone are you in?
Where do you regularly commute to and how long does it take?
Are you satisfied with the distance from your home to your local station?

Meanings of home:

What does 'home' mean to you?

Other:

Can you take me through a typical workday in your home? What time do you get up? What do you do first? Then what do you do? What time do you leave for work/school? When do you return?
Typically speaking, when society thinks of 'home' images of the suburban, nuclear family with a father, mother and a couple of children come to mind. Would you agree with this? How do you think your home fits into this picture?
How does your home differ from the home you grew up in? Location? Style? Size?
Did you come out in your family home? How was that experience?
When did you leave the family home? Why did you leave and where did you go?
Do heterosexual people know your sexually identity when they come into your home (e.g. family, friends, tradespeople)? Do sexuality-identifying objects and arrangements (like shared bedrooms) stay visible, or are they hidden?
Do you use, or would you use, an LGBTQ service such as a gay plumber?
What might be some websites or services that you use that relate to your sexual identity? <i>E.g.</i> Gaydar, Grindr, a LGBTQ group on your Facebook page.
Do you think your neighbours know your sexuality?
In terms of your sexuality, are there other places that feel like home to you?

END



Call for interviewees

Ph.D. student seeks LGBT
(lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans) people
to interview about home, home life
and ideas of home.

Singles or couples,
age 18-100 welcome.

For more info contact



*Although unpaid, you will be helping
support a very important research project
on queer domesticity in London.*

Queer domesticity research project contact [redacted]
Queer domesticity research project contact [redacted]
Queer domesticity research project contact [redacted]
Queer domesticity research project contact [redacted]
Queer domesticity research project contact [redacted]
Queer domesticity research project contact [redacted]
Queer domesticity research project contact [redacted]
Queer domesticity research project contact [redacted]
Queer domesticity research project contact [redacted]
Queer domesticity research project contact [redacted]

Appendix D - Home study: Qualitative Research Data Showing Respondents’ Demographic and Identity Characteristics and Housing Arrangements.³⁹

Pseudonym	Sexuality ⁴⁰	Age	Class Background ⁴¹	Ethnicity ⁴²	Current Occupation ⁴³	Country of Birth	London Borough of Residence	Household Occupancy	Type of Dwelling	House Tenure
Adam	Gay man	60	Working class	White British (Scottish)	Retired	Scotland	Southwark	Single occupancy	Flat in a two level building	Assisted renting ⁴⁴
Alison	Gay woman	26	Upper-middle class	White other.	Government sector	Germany	Wandsworth	Living with flatmates	Terraced house	Rent (private)
Basil and Barclay	Gay; Gay	78; 56	Lower-middle class; middle class	Jewish/ Caucasian; European Cauc.	Retired; Retired	England; The Netherlands	Richmond upon Thames	Living with partner	Flat in a private block	Own (leasehold) ⁴⁵
Betty	90% gay	46	Working class	Caucasian	Healthcare service	France	Kingston upon Thames	Living with flatmates	Semi-detached house	Rent (private)
Caleb	Gay. Very gay.	23	Working class	White British	Student	England	Merton & Bournemouth ⁴⁶	Living with partner	Flat in a building	Assisted renting
Dale	Gay	43	Working class	White other	Academic	New Zealand	Barnet	Living with partner	Terraced house	Own (freehold)
Darrell	Gay	67	Working class	White British	Private sector	England	Camden	Single occupancy and with partner ⁴⁷	Flat in a private block	Own (leasehold)
Dean	Gay	58	Upper-middle class	White UK	Voluntary sector	England	Barnet	Single occupancy	Flat in a private block	Own (leasehold)
Derrick	Gay	22	Working class	White British	Student	England	Haringey	Living with partner	Flat in a terraced house	Partner owns (leasehold)
Devin	Gay	50	Middle class	White	Retired	England	Waltham Forest	Single occupancy	Flat in a terraced house	Assisted renting
Edmund	Gay	39	Upper-middle class	Hispanic	Healthcare professional	Colombia	Tower Hamlets	Living with partner	Flat in a terraced house	Partner owns (leasehold)
Eric	Gay	60	Classless ⁴⁸	Caucasian	Voluntary sector	Switzerland	Lambeth	Living with partner	Terraced house	Own (freehold)
Eva	Queer	23	Upper-middle class	White German	Student	Germany	Hackney	Living with flatmate	Flat in a private block	Rent (private)
Gary and Jack	Gay; Gay	30; 45	Middle class; working class	White British; White British	Private sector; Government sector	UK; UK	Lambeth	Living with partner	Flat in a private block	Own (leasehold)
Gerard	Gay	58	Middle class	White	Retired	South Africa	Southwark	Single occupancy	Flat in a private block	Own (leasehold)

³⁹ Note: I gave respondents the opportunity to ‘pass’ on any or all questions. Only in one case did a respondent pass on age. He jokingly suggested that I would tell the mutual friend that put us in touch.

⁴⁰ Like all categories, these values were not predetermined; questions were worded in such a way which asked “how would you describe your...?”.

⁴¹ Similar to the above footnote, these values are respondents’ perceptions of their families’ socio-economic status while they were growing up. These are not based on actual family incomes.

⁴² Respondents were not given options to pick from, which explains why there are so many unique answers within this category.

⁴³ To preserve anonymity I have turned these values into more generalised categories.

⁴⁴ This refers to any form of government assisted renting, from a housing association to council flat.

⁴⁵ Common property ownership in the UK consists of either leasehold (the right to live, but one does not own the land or exterior building) or freehold (one owns the land and building).

⁴⁶ For the purposes of this interview Caleb talked about the home he has set up for himself temporarily while away at school in Bournemouth, UK.

⁴⁷ Darrell noted a unique living situation where each partner has his own home a mile from each other. Darrell often goes to his partner’s home in the evening and returns during the day. This arrangement has worked for 28 years.

⁴⁸ Eric observed that “in Switzerland we have a very egalitarian society... everyone has the same opportunities education wise” (interview 4 February 2011).

Appendix D continued (page 2)

Pseudonym	Sexuality	Age	Class Background	Ethnicity	Current Occupation	Country of Birth	London Borough of Residence	Household Occupancy	Type of Dwelling	House Tenure
Hugo	Homosexual	34	Working class	Latin American	Private sector	Colombia	Lambeth	Living with flatmate	Flat in a terraced house	Rent (private)
James	Gay	45	Working class	Spanish	Private sector	Spain	Westminster	Single occupancy ⁴⁹	Flat in a council block	Assisted renting
Janet	Lesbian, more or less ⁵⁰	44	Lower-middle class	White British	Private sector	England	Cambridgeshire ⁵¹	Living with partner and three children	Detached house	Own (freehold)
Janice and Sarah	Lesbian; Bisexual	43; 37	Working class; middle class	Scottish; White Australian	Healthcare administration; healthcare administration	Scotland; Australia	Haringey	Living with partner and child	Terraced house	Own (freehold)
Jason	Gay	42	Middle class	White British	Government sector	England	Haringey	Living with partner	Terraced house	Assisted renting
Jerry	Gay	27	Lower-middle class	White British	Healthcare professional	Wales	Southwark	Living with flatmate	Flat in a private block	Rent (private)
Julio	Gay	34	Working class	Hispanic	Student	U.S.A.	Lewisham	Living with Partner	Terraced house	Rent (private)
Karen and Gail	Bisexual; Lesbian	23; 24	Middle class; middle class	White British; White British	Voluntary sector; own business	England; England	Richmond upon Thames	Living with partner and housemate	Terraced house	Rent (private)
Kristen	Heterosexual ⁵²	40	Middle class	White British	Unemployed	Germany	Camden	Single occupancy	Flat in a private block	Assisted renting
Kylie and Kiera	Lesbian; Lesbian	32; 34	Middle-working class; middle-working class	White Caucasian; white Caucasian	Healthcare professional; private sector	Australia; South Africa	Wandsworth	Living with partner	Terraced house	Rent (private)
Margaret (real name)	A spectrum	67	Working class	European	Retired	England	Redbridge	Single occupancy	Detached house	Own (freehold)
Mario	Gay	22	Upper-middle class	White	Student	Germany	Hackney	Living with flatmates	Terraced house	Rent (private)
Matt	Gay	59	Middle class	White	Retired	Wales	Brent	Single occupancy	Flat in a converted council block	Rent (private)
Maurice	Gay	39	Middle class	White British	Private sector	England	Lambeth	Living with partner	Flat in a block	Own (leasehold)
Michael and Bradley	Gay; Gay	29; 29	Middle class; middle class	Serbian; White Irish	Private sector; private sector	Bosnia and Herzegovina; England	Tower Hamlets	Living with partner	Flat in a private block	Rent (private)
Parker	Gay	39	Upper-middle class	White other (German)	Student	Belgium	Islington	Living with flatmate	Terraced house	Rent (private)
Peter	Gay	50	Middle class	White British	Retired	England	Wandsworth	Living with partner	Terraced house	Own (freehold)

⁴⁹ Partner has his own home.
⁵⁰ Janet is referring to her contested sexuality as a trans woman post-operation.
⁵¹ Given the difficulty in recruiting transgender participants I allowed the study to be expanded outside of London. Janet works in central London and our interview took place near her workplace in the West End.
⁵² Post-operative transsexual.

Appendix D continued (page 3)

Pseudonym	Sexuality	Age	Class Background	Ethnicity	Current Occupation	Country of Birth	London Borough of Residence	Household Occupancy	Type of Dwelling	House Tenure
Rachel	Gay	27	Middle class	White British	Private sector	England	Lewisham	Single occupancy	Flat in a semi-detached house	Rent (private)
Ritchie	Gay	Pass	Middle class	White	Academic	England	Tower Hamlets	Single occupancy	Terraced house	Own (freehold)
Robert	95% gay	39	Working class	Jewish east ender	Student	England	Tower Hamlets	Single occupancy	Flat in a council block	Assisted renting
Roger	Gay	51	Lower-middle class	White English	Unemployed	England	Waltham Forest	Single occupancy	Flat in a private block	Rent (private)
Sally	Lesbian	36	Middle class	Other	Private sector	Colombia	Barnet	Living with flatmate	Flat in a private block	Rent (private)
Scott and Corby	Gay; gay	36; 40	Working class; working class	White other; European	Private sector; own business	Germany; Spain	Southwark	Living with partner in workplace	Loft conversion	Rent (private)
Seila	Gay	28	Middle class	White Hungarian	Student	Hungary	Lewisham	Living with flatmates	Terraced house	Rent (private)
Sharon	Lesbian ⁵³	32	Working class	White British	Private sector	Scotland	Hertfordshire ⁵⁴	Living with partner	Flat in a private block	Rent (private)

⁵³ Post-operative transsexual.
⁵⁴ Given the difficulty in recruiting transgender participants I allowed the study to be expanded outside of London. Sharon volunteers at the London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard, which is where our interview took place.

Appendix E - LGBTQ Domestic Work Interview Questions

Interviewee:

Company name:

Date:

Location of interview:

Please feel free to pass on any of the questions if you think they are irrelevant or too personal.

Background information:

What is your age (approximately, if you like)?
What is your occupation? Are you self-employed or working for a company?
What geographical areas do you work in? <i>E.g.</i> central London, all of London <i>etc.</i>
How would you describe your class background?
What is your ethnicity/ethnic background?
How would you describe your sexual orientation?

About the line of work you do:

How did you first get involved in LGBTQ domestic work?
How long have you been working in the business?
What are the advantages and disadvantages of working in LGBTQ homes?
Can you tell me a bit about what a typical day at work is like?
Where do you get most of your customers from? How important is advertising in the gay press?
Do you charge more, less or the same for this service compared to the straight competition?
When you have been hired and are working on a job, how often does the issue of sexual identity come up?

About the people and homes you work for:

Who are your main clients? <i>e.g.</i> gay men.
Why do you think LGBTQ people want to hire you versus the straight competition?
Do you have any interesting stories about working in a LGBTQ homes that you want to share with me?
Do you think LGBTQ people have a high proportion of disposable income which allows them to hire people to work in the home?
Do you think there is a difference in style or furnishings of LGBTQ homes versus straight homes?

Have you seen any visible identifiers in the homes you visit that might signify a client's LGBTQ identity? <i>E.g.</i> rainbow flags, pictures <i>etc.</i>
--

Do you have any other comments or thoughts that you want to share about working in LGBTQ homes?

END

Appendix F - Tradesperson Study: Qualitative Research Data Showing Respondents’ Demographic and Identity Characteristics.⁵⁵

Pseudonym	Sexuality ⁵⁶	Age	Class Background ⁵⁷	Ethnicity	Company type/ occupation	Geographical areas of work
Brenda	Lesbian	43	Middle class	White	Painter/ decorator	Hertfordshire, Essex and North London
Carl	Bisexual	49	Working Class	White	Handyman	London
Cory	Gay. Definitely.	46	Middle class	White Caucasian	Painter/ decorator	London
Dwayne	Gay	58	Middle class	White European	Interior design company	central London
Jackson	Gay	34	Working class	Hispanic	Cleaner	London
Julie and Carina	Lesbian; Queer	43; 31	Middle class; working class	White British; White American	Cabinet makers	London
Marshal	Gay	45	Middle class	White British	Cleaner	London, Surrey and Essex
Randy	Gay	39	Working class	White British	Electrician	London
Sean	Straight. Sort of. ⁵⁸	27	Middle class	White British	Moving/removals	London
Tommy	Bisexual	Forties	Middle class	Jewish	Nude cleaner	London

⁵⁵ I gave respondents the opportunity to ‘pass’ on any or all questions.

⁵⁶ Like all categories, these values were not predetermined; questions were worded in such a way as to ask “how would you describe your...?”.

⁵⁷ These values are respondents’ perceptions of their families’ socio-economic status while they were growing up. These are not based on actual family incomes.

⁵⁸ Sean explained that he identifies as straight but is currently dating a pre-operation transsexual (male to female).

Appendix G – Domesticity Participant Writing Diary⁵⁹

Name:

Date:

Instructions: Once a day for one week please spend a bit of time writing about your home life. Please pay attention to the writing task as it changes each day.

Monday – objects in my home:

What are the most important ‘things’ in your home and why? ‘Things’ could include: your bed; the art you purchased on a trip abroad; a collection of something; concert memorabilia; etc. Do any of these objects reflect your sexual identity (*e.g.* a photo of a partner)?

Tuesday – hypothetically modifying my home:

If there were no obstacles (*i.e.* time or money) what would you change about your dwelling and why (moving house is not an option)? Some things to think about are: The layout of rooms or levels – would you change the layout? Would you modify your kitchen or bathroom? Would you redecorate any rooms? If applicable, what about the outside space? What about the outside look of your residence?

Wednesday – what home means to me:

Write down what ‘home’ means to you. Try to be specific and personal.

Thursday – multiple locations of home:

Given what you’ve said in the box above on what home means to you, could you feel at home in more than one place? *E.g.* If your home is a place where you relax, could you feel at home while on holiday? Or if you said home is a place where you can be comfortable with a partner, could you feel at home at his or her house?

Friday – my home and my feelings:

Some possible things to write about: What really angers you about your home? What makes you happy? What are some happy memories in your home? Etc.

Saturday - computing my sexuality

How important is your personal computer (or other communication devices, like a mobile phone) to your sexual identity? Please list any websites or services that you use that relate to your sexual identity, *e.g.* pinknews.co.uk, GRINDR, Gaydar, a gay book club Facebook page, gay mailing lists, etc.

⁵⁹ In an effort to save space I have deleted the boxes where participants could write their answers. To give an idea of how much space I allowed, it was approximately half a page for each day’s response.

Sunday – my home versus the ideal of home:

Would you agree that for the large majority of society ‘home’ is still associated with the heterosexual nuclear family (a father – the breadwinner, a mother – the homemaker, and a couple of children) situated in suburbia? How does your home fit into this view? Some things to think about: does your home have two fathers/mothers? Is your home a flat in a building? Is the layout of your home open-planned? Does everyone in the residence equally contribute to bills and chores? Are you a single parent? Or single without children? Do you have parties in your home? Etc.

Thank you for completing this writing diary. Without your contribution my research would not be possible! When complete please email as an attachment or place in the postage-paid envelope and return to me.

Brent Pilkey
PhD Student, Bartlett School of Architecture

Appendix H – Interview Consent Form

UCL Bartlett School of Architecture
PhD Programme in Architectural History and Theory

Copyright assignment and consent form – Number _____

The interviewee agrees as follows:

I am aware of the research being conducted and of my role as a participant. I understand that it is my right to withdraw from the process at any time.

I permanently assign the copyright of this interview to the interviewer. In assigning copyright I understand that the interviewer will preserve copies of this material in accordance with responsible data protection.

If applicable, a copy of the audio file and/or transcript will be sent to me upon request to the interviewer. I understand that I have the right to ask for modifications to be made to the transcript.

The interviewee can chose to agree to the following (please tick circle):

☐ Any information identifying me as an individual is to be left out and made anonymous.

The recording ☐ and/or transcript ☐ of this interview can be submitted to a reputable local archive once the project is completed. I understand that this would be done in respect of the copyright assignment above and of anonymity if requested.

Date of recording:

Interviewee

Print name: _____

Date:

Email: _____

Interviewer

Print name: Brent Pilkey

Date:

Address: The Bartlett School of Architecture, Wates House, 22 Gordon Street,
London WC1H 0BQ

Email: _____